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THE USE AND STUDY

OF

HISTORY:

BEING THE SUBSTANCE OF A COURSE OF LECTURES
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BY

W. Torrens
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TO

WILLIAM ELLIOT HUDSON, ESQ.

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I.

INTRODUCTION.

Clarorum virorum facta moresque posteris tradere, antiquitus usitatum. * * * Adempto loquendi audiendique commercio, memoriam quoque ipsam cum voce perdissemus, si tam in nostra potestate esset oblivisci, quam tacere. Nunc demum redit animus; quanquam natura infirmitatis humanæ tardiora sunt remedia, quam mala.

TACITUS, Agric. Vit. 1, 2, 3.

THE time has come, when it befits no longer our position as a people to neglect the study of history. Why it has hitherto been so much neglected amongst us, I am not here to say. It might be that we should not all agree, if we attempted to compute the causes that in this, as in so many other ways, have held our nation back from running the race, which nature seems so palpably to have set before her; but I will hope that all of us are equally sorrow-stricken and ashamed, whenever we think upon the ill-cultured and unfruitful energy of our country; and that we are all alike thoroughly desirous to

improve henceforth, the popular capacities of Ireland to the highest degree; and, in every branch of moral and of physical developement, to know no content, or folding of satisfied arms, until our country takes its just and fitting place among the awakened nations of the earth.

Were there no other reason, therefore, why we should begin to brush the dust from our historic book-shelves, than the example which all surrounding countries challenge us to imitate, the necessity of not allowing ourselves to be distanced in any part of the race, ought to stimulate our industry and zeal. I will not admit that there is any reason, why we should not compete with any nation, however lofty its pretensions be, in every branch of intellectual research, learning, or creation. There are few things which Irishmen have deliberately and perseveringly tried to do, that they have not succeeded in doing; and, so long as I remember that you are the countrymen of Swift, of Goldsmith, and of Burke, I cannot believe that there exists any natural or intelligible reason, why you should not acquire the habit of studying that history whose wisdom and light radiate throughout all their compositions.

But history has higher claims. You are citizens of a free state; you are morally, intellectually, politically—and therefore in a thousand ways you responsibly are men. Directly or indirectly—palpably or unapparently—the fate of yourselves, and of your children after you is in your own hands. If blind, and satisfied with blindness—if ignorant, and content to remain so—I will not say the doom of your land is irrevocably sealed, but I will say I see no hope of its regeneration. But if, as the numbers I this night address in themselves demonstrate, you yearn after knowledge, and are open-eared to honest teaching, then have I great hopes, buoyant expectations, and a fixed faith in your ability and will to call our country from the tomb.

In each of your minds opinions and ideas are hourly sown, whose fruit will hereafter ripen into either good or evil. It is not for me to say which is the good and which the evil. But as tillers of the soil of your own hearts, are you not bound to ponder well what is worth planting there,—what it is safe to let the wayward wind of accident, and circumstance, and kill-time reading, plant? And considering what sort of soil it is that is to be planted, and the value of expe-

rience in every species of husbandry, were it not an inestimable advantage to have access to that experimental knowledge, which has been laid up by others for our instruction? Ought you not greatly to rejoice if one should say to you, come with me to the Gate of the Past,—I have the key, and by it you may enter therein,—behold the good fruit of other days, how it was cultured from wildness first, and how means to shelter its growth were devised;—how on the shores of the Central Sea it seemed for a time to approach nearly to perfection, till unbidden weeds sprang up and choked it;—what expedients renewed its health for a season, and what causes contributed to its decline:—and suppose at the end of that garden of wonder, another gate led you to a different one, where the blossoms wore a more ensanguined hue, and the nettles stung more sharply:¹—and suppose you might tread the clear paths at your leisure, and note and examine each notable sample, analyse each

¹ From Philip of Macedon's time to that of Augustus may be distinctively called the imperializing period. The great thought of the world during that epoch was, which should have the ascendancy among nations. Alexander, Pyrrhus, Ptolemy, Mithridates, in the east, and the rulers of Carthage and Rome in the West, to use the words of our own great orator, applied to Napoleon's system, "lived but to fight, and fought to live." (Grattan;—Speech on the War of 1815.)

varying soil, and compute each peculiar advantage, would you not follow with grateful step, and drinking ear, and vagrant eye,—and rejoice at the invitation? Yet the gates of time's garden lie open to you; you may enter and roam through those hallowed grounds at will; save for the comparatively few classic portals, you do not so much as need a key, and even these may be opened almost for asking. Will you not avail yourselves of such a privilege?

Nor is this all. Not merely are the seed-fields of all human experience thus accessible to you, but, through many of the best and richest of them, you are offered the companionship of eloquent guides intimately acquainted with all worth dwelling on, and ready to explain what may seem at first sight, strange or incomprehensible. And such guides! The greatest minds that ever dwelt in clay,—the incarnations of the knowledge of their time,—the recording mirrors wherein, immortally sublimed, we are privileged to behold all the strength and the weakness, the guilt and the sorrow, the beauty and the heroism of the past. While such men speak, antiquity is not gone by; it is still present with us,—given for our learning; how can we neglect it?

You see the world around you changing. You feel that within yourselves new ideas, new inquiries, and new wants are daily springing up. Change, like all other things in the checquered web of life, is sometimes good, but often likewise evil. Think you that this sense of instability is unprecedented or unparalleled? Think you that your moral, social, national position is specific and peculiar, or that your singular necessities demand only one special cure-all theory, and a tenacious adherence to its prescriptions? My friends, listen not to such imposture. Hear all that is new cheerfully; but forget not ungratefully the old. Be assured of it, there are more new names and new pretences in the world, than new ideas or discoveries of new truth. *New truth!*—Alas, for the vanity of man! You understand me here as speaking of moral truth, not of the results of physical enquiry. In the latter there has no doubt much headway been made,—way that no chart or sounding of antiquity had foreshown. But, as a moral being, man hath not much changed. He has dug up new ores in his fallow field; but his inheritance for the most part is the same. I say not that mankind have morally learned nothing—socially im-

proved in nothing—politically invented or created nothing, since the first huntsman ruled as lawless king. How long men were governed without fixed or public laws, is curiously illustrated by the fact, that “the word answering to *law* in the language of the later Greeks, does not occur in the Homeric poems, nor do they contain any allusion which might lead us to suppose that any assemblies ever met for the purpose of legislation. The rich and powerful seem to have been subject to no more effectual restraint, than the fear of Divine anger, or of public opinion.”² Yet one is tired of hearing small men cry their stolen goods,—the cast-off garments of a robbed antiquity, as novelties of their own invention.

The same struggle for political ascendancy, at first between the one and the few, and then between the few and the many,—engaged men’s minds in Carthage and Sicily, in Greece and the mediæval states of Italy, in the Hanse towns, and the Netherlands, from age to age,—in each, of course, with different dresses, scenes, and decora-

² THIRLWALL: History of Greece, chap. vi; a book which ought to be in every popular library, and from whose eloquent and faithful narrative, clearer and better conceptions of Greek life may be gathered, than from any other English work with which I am acquainted.

tions, but in all substantially the same which our poor self-importance and neglect of history imagines now to be presented for the first time on our island stage. Parties have changed their nicknames. In truth, party has a knack at that sort of thing. Whenever it gets worsted under an old denomination, recourse is forthwith had to some unsullied title;³ and letters patent issue, authorizing all who are growing ashamed of their torn banners, to come and enlist under new.

But, in the main, it is instructive to mark, how close is the resemblance between the popular discontents of different times, and the springs and progress of their action. Features of curious coincidence are equally observable, in the still more varied developments of commerce, art, international intercourse, and all that in the ordinary signification of the phrase is termed civilization. So obvious indeed are many of these resemblances, and so seductive is the lure of a seemingly complete analogy, that one of the gravest errors which a student of history has to guard against, is the inferring too hastily similar results from apparently similar causes. And this dan-

³ See Mr. G. C. Lewis's Essay on the Meaning of Political Terms.

ger peculiarly besets what is termed political history, or rather we should say the party portions of history. Take an example:—

The same love of novelty in philosophical opinion, at first pleading upon martyr knees, for toleration from its hoary rival prescription, and then grown presumptuous and vain, tending in its turn towards intolerance of every thing ancient and venerable,—interested, captivated, shook, and finally rent asunder the states of Greece two thousand years ago,⁴—that in our own days has occupied the minds of European nations, and uplifted their century-riveted institutions “like weeds upon its wave.” Hereditary right and democratic power wrestled for the mastery at Corcyra and in Athens, much as the like influences did in Florence and at Ghent in the fourteenth century, and at Philadelphia and Paris in the eighteenth. A careful scrutiny will detect, no doubt, many and perhaps essential differences pervading the entire,—influences here that were not, nor any counterpart of them, there,—passions, resentments, aims, ideas, elevating or degrading this enactment of the great

⁴ See “The Clouds,”—and other plays of Aristophanes, the value of which in a historic point of view is wholly inestimable.

drama of power, of which no trace can be found in that. Nevertheless the woof of the want and woe of human suffering in all is much the same; and at a distant or cursory view, the incidents of one historic tapestry are often hardly distinguishable from those of another. And here comes in the practical difference between the use and the abuse,—the wise study, and the superficial reading without a *true* study,—of history.

We cannot bind our ear close to history's shell, wherein the echos of time's ebbing tide still magically sound, without being startled by familiar murmurs against the "landed interest" and "the absentees;" and, listen again,—hear ye not the nobility retorting by a phrase, which may literally be rendered "the undisciplined mob."⁵ Again, there were the "secret societies" of Greece, bound together by illicit oaths;⁶ and then there were the municipalities of Italy with their privileges opposed in civic rivalry to the local influence of wealth and birth. The laws relative to debtor and creditor, and regarding the tenure of land, as well as those concerning

⁵ Wachsmuth's Historical Antiquities, vol.i. § 32.

⁶ Hermann's Political Antiquities, § 70, &c.

annual elections, and the just limits of the pension list, are all debated in the Roman annalists with a pith and eloquence, which we might do worse than literally follow in our discussions.⁷ Still more curious and still more instructive, I think, are the early laws relative to agriculture and trade ;⁸ laws which, when compared and illustrated by the corresponding institutions for the encouragement of industry, in that mid-day epoch, flippantly called the Dark Ages, appear to be full of sound practical ideas, and suggestions valuable for our own distracted, and in this respect, most ill-ruled time.

Did time permit, it were easy to amuse you with varied and piquant illustrations of these and similar matters. But, as in an introductory lecture that would be impossible, I shall endeavour hereafter, when we come to particular histories, so to treat them, as not altogether to omit topics, which may avail perhaps more than any reasonings of mine to kindle your curiosity, and impel you to a better investigation of history. Meanwhile, however, let me earnestly impress upon your

⁷ Livy VI. 32—39. Tacitus, Ann. II. 36, 38.

⁸ Plutarch's Life of Solon.—De Pauw's Philosophical Dissertations on the Greeks, I. 9.—Böckh's Economy of Athens, I. 9, 10.

minds, that were there no such coincidences of circumstance, phrase, or party, capable of being shown to you, history would not therefore be the less worthy of your study. And I shall indeed feel it necessary to repeat more than once, an admonition against the desire of exploring apt lines of parallel, or catching at quotable fragments to suit your preconceived opinions. This is not to use history like men, but to play with it like children; this is not to listen mutely and reverentially to its still small voice, but to make a parrot's clatter with its incidental tones. Your own good sense will tell you, that a calm and teachable frame of mind is the only safe one, wherein to ascend that eminence, whence you may behold all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. It is a solemn sight to all men,—to the wise an humbling and a thrilling vision; for, while you gaze at the empire of to-day, its glitter grows dim, and its banners fall, and its towers crumble down into ruin, and the place of its too self-confident pride knoweth its boast no more! History is a solemn thing.

Were you unable then in any one instance to trace, in forms analogous to those wherewith you are familiar, the progress to eminence or decline,

of any single nation, there would still remain abundant food for historical inquiry and reflection. The spiritual causes of national results are seldom hard to find. As you pass from scene to scene of the world-drama, you begin to perceive that, however moulded by climate, soil, or character, the great moral laws that rule the destiny of mankind are few, immutable, and plain. You will find that national security does not depend on mountain barriers, or ocean girdles, but upon a self-respecting and a self-reliant temper in the people. You will see in distended empire, weakness oftener than strength ; because you will discern, that national conquest and ascendancy is but a livery imposed to hide multiplied sufferings and lengthening chains. You will cease to wonder at the disparity, between the physical greatness and the true might of nations. You will find their real power not measurable by area of territory, accident of position, or density of population.⁹ And look-

9 "Severity of climate will not ultimately repel an invader, for that scatters and exhausts the population. Difficulties of country have been perpetually overpassed by a daring invader, in the attack of a feeble or negligent people. To what nation were their snows, their marshes, or their sands, a barrier against the great armies of the ancient or the modern world. The Alps and the Pyrenees have been passed as often

ing, not merely *at*, but *into* the political and social economy of the various countries, that will pass before you in historical review, you will find that their integrity and welfare has been far less dependant on the forms of their institutions, than upon the vitality and the earnestness of spirit that has animated those forms. You will learn that there is after all but one enemy whom any people need fear,—but one antagonist whom they have never overthrown,—the loss of self-respect. A man is never lost till he abandons himself; and while a nation hopes it lives. While its conscience is clear, it will hope, nor hope in vain. But the spirit-strength which the consciousness of innocency gives, may be forfeited by domestic vice, as well as by public crime. A man may wrong a stranger or his own kindred; he may rob a neighbour or tyrannize over his own household. Which is the worse sin of the two, I need not question; enough that he who falls from his integrity in either way, has drifted from the only anchorage of his soul's peace and safety.

And history will show you that nations are

as they have been attempted. But no empire can conquer a nation of millions of men *determined* to resist."—GEORGE CROLY.

but men,—that in both the same sin is sin, and in both the same retribution follows. The drunken father pawns his children's bed ; the tyrant wastes his people's substance. They both live, riot, reel, and die in selfish disregard of the conditions, wherefore alone they were entrusted with their respective powers ; there is sorrow in their loudest laughter ; all who are dependent on them pine ; soon or late the means of future good, which they have mortgaged for the price of present evil, becomes the spoiler's prey ; they die, and no man builds their monument.

As with individuals, you will often find in the life of nations, apparently successful fraud,—the unoffending wronged—the bully go unpunished. But read on. The worm grows with the swollen heart of vanity and oppression. Which of the empires founded not upon nature, but upon violence done to nature, have long endured ? While Athens¹⁰ and Carthage¹¹ were content with the fruit of their own toil, they thrived invincible and free ; when they took to foreign spoliation, the compact fabric of their greatness burst asunder, like the attenuated bubble. Come later

¹⁰ Wachsmuth, § 57.

¹¹ Aristotle, Polit. II. 9.

down. How long did the empire of Charlemagne endure? Not till his corpse was cold. Think of Spain. Long before the Romans had ventured out of Italy, their great antagonists the Carthaginians had established colonies there. It would seem, however, that no settled plan of subjugation was adopted, until the third century B. C., when, as compensation for the loss of Sicily, its reduction was undertaken by Carthage. The tender heart of Rome was rent with grief for the sufferings of their Spanish allies,¹² and the senate made a decree in favour of taking Spain under their protection. The second Punic war drove the Carthaginians out of the Peninsula, and the Romans *took care of it* for the next seven hundred years. At the inburst of the northern nations, Spain was plundered and appropriated by the Visigoths and Vandals, (about 430, A. D.) Early in the eighth century, the Saracens wrested its finest provinces from the degenerate Goths; and under Mahometan rule, Cordova and Granada rose to the enjoyment of a civilization, then unknown in any other part of Europe; and the splendid relics of their science, art, and learning still remain. But it was a civilization

¹² LIVY, xxi. 16.

foreign to the soil. The conquering and conquered races would not mingle; and after a prolonged and sanguinary struggle, the Moors were, about the close of the fifteenth century, finally expelled. Untaught by her own sufferings, Spain had hardly rid herself of the last link of vassalage, when she also took to the business of nation throttling. Her navies covered the seas; her armies were irresistible; the old hemisphere was too narrow for her ambition, and the heart's blood of Mexico and Peru was mingled in the wine-cup of her lust, when she boasted that "the sun never set upon the dependencies of Spain."¹⁵ Where is that empire now? A few generations had hardly passed away, until Holland, Italy, and Portugal flung off the yoke; and we have in our own days seen Mexico and South America overturn the load her avarice and ambition laid upon them; while she, their haughty mistress, scarce can lift her feeble head; and all her guilty gold has seldom long sufficed to save her noble but ill-cultivated plains from being made a mighty "field of blood to bury strangers in."¹⁶

¹⁵ ROBERTSON'S *View of the State of Europe*; p. 64, note 42.

¹⁶ See Lord MAHON'S *History of the War of the Succession*; and Gen. Napier's admirable *History of the Peninsular War*.

Look at the opposite page. Peace and security you will in the main find attendant upon national chastity and contentedness. What has kept Switzerland free? Not her Alpine bastions; these have been crossed as often as they have been attempted. Again and again has the impetuous tide of aggression swept over her icy walls: why—why has it never remained? Is it because her people are all of one mind, in habits, customs, or opinions?—there is not perhaps in Europe a population so divided, in creed, dialect, and local institutions.¹⁷ But they have indeed one national faith and baptism—that of country and of freedom. They pronounce the words differently;¹⁸ but they all utter them with heart emphasis. There are various parties in Switzerland, but there has never been an anti-Swiss party. Undeviatingly they have held the faithful tenour of their national way, through changes in religion, and amid the shock of neighbouring empires,—“coveting no other men’s gold or ap-

¹⁷ The best popular summary of Helvetian history is that by M. Zschokke, a translation of which is within general reach. Thourel’s *Annals of Geneva* is, I believe, the latest contribution of importance to the detailed *Chronicles of Switzerland*.

¹⁸ The language of the German cantons is wholly unintelligible to the peasantry of the Italian districts; and the western provinces speak French.—INGLIS’S *Tour* in 1830, &c.

parel, but with their own hands ministering to their necessities;" never seeking to make a slave, and never, therefore, doomed to recognise a master.¹⁹ May their reward be with them, everlastingly !

History is then, it seems to me, a great plea in favour of a belief in the moral government of the world,—rightly understood, it is the great protest subscribed by all the chief events of time, against the drifting theory of chance. Looking only around one, with the rampancy and wantonness of present evil in our sight, its accounting causes and its penal consequences equally left out of view, it is not to be wondered at, that, to many a sincere man, existence seems but a mighty maze, whereof he is only sure that he has lost the clue. To many such has history furnished this clue,—been as a true and genuine revelation ; nay, is there not in it for each of us, a voice of teaching which savours of self-adequate authority, which we are conscious that we ought to heed ? Does it not take up the toys of time, and show them unto us as no more toys but links

¹⁹ The assignment by France of the "four bailliages of Savoy" to the Federate Cantons, in 1512, as a recompense for the aid they had furnished in the Italian wars, is the chief exception upon record to their unaggressive policy.

of a chain mystic and indissoluble? It tells us how men and things from age to age were ordered, and suggests invincibly the thought, which in spite of all the sparrow chattering of incredulity around us, will widen in our hearts to a belief—that as it was at the beginning, it is now, and shall hereafter be, none of it in vain.

“Mere old prejudices,” cries the scoffer. But let no nickname scare you. Honest men have suffered themselves too often to be bullied by sheer dint of an all-questioning scepticism, out of the very best things about them. For myself I own I would much sooner part with those convictions I have got by logical induction, than with those, of whose truth I can give no analytical account : and I know that these latter are stigmatized as prejudices. Be it so. I have more comfort in them, than the few certainties I have got by rote, and could compel you to assent to here, to-night, by force of demonstration. Ah, 'tis almost time to give over the dull slang about “prejudice,” and “prove it,” and “the test of utility.” This is a lower wisdom than the ape's, for he plucks the nut, and stores it in his pouch until he wants it ; but your monkey of the Bentham breed will not condescend

to pull or crack a single nut, until you shall have satisfied his mind, by statistic reference to filbert averages, that, if not certain, it is at least more probable, that the particular husk in question does contain a toothsome kernel, than that it does not. Lord help the monkeys !—if they were no wiser than the sceptics, they must inevitably starve ; nor does it seem possible to me, that the attempt to found either national or social systems upon the principles of incredulity, can ever end otherwise, than history will show you it has ever ended, namely, in flat failure. It is useless then to make a god of this utility ; it is irrational to make an autocrat of reason, as contradistinguished from its natural allies, and equals, —traditional wisdom, intuitive perception, root-unseen conviction, faith. A merely negative philosophy, which starts with empty wallet, hoping to pick up by degrees a moral fortune, and resolved to let nothing inside its pedlar's lid, but what, with crucible and hammer, it has battered and tested to be solid gold, may trudge long and gather much, but its doom is to die a beggar. Knowledge, knack, skill, accomplishments—you can buy and sell ; but worth, courage, steadfastness, self-reliance,—in what shop can you pur-

chase these ? Yet these are the great riches of a man—his “ glad inheritance.” A spirit’s fortune cannot be made by acquisition. To improve the stock you started with, is all that you can do. Improve it as you will, the best of it will be that you sought not, bought not, wrought not—that whose germ came to you in childhood, and got fast hold within you when you recked not. But the philosophy that would have you cast aside all prejudice, (as the phrase is) at manhood’s threshold, and begin life empty-hearted, seems not sufficient in my mind, to keep a man from suicide—“ There is no speculation in those eyes !” It is negative from first to last,—negative of the ideal,—literal in all its acceptance. This neither can sustain nor satisfy. Something affirmative in its own right,—something independent of extrinsic advocacy,—something you feel that you have long felt to be true, though you never heard it *said* before,—is essential to our peace and health and safety. Energy, while in the stream of active competition, is, to most men, easy ; but when that is over, and the tumult is done, when in solitude flesh and heart fail, you need something to lean upon, to fortify, to console. Oh, Heaven ! must one first prove it to be a consola-

tion? Any guess at the reading of life's riddle were better surely than that.²⁰

National experience testifies as amply as that of individuals to this truth; and the testimony of nations is history. History has great things to tell of men and nations that had faith—high and earnest faith.²¹ But no word save of disruption, paralysis, impurity, decay,—has history of unbelievers. Hereafter we shall have occasion to dwell more particularly upon some signal instances of this. Meanwhile it may suffice to say, that the two-fold lesson taught by history is, that national wrongdoers wrong themselves, and

²⁰ "I had rather believe all the fables in the Legend and the Talmund and the Koran, than that this universal frame is without a mind."—BACON. And yet it is impossible not to feel how great an impetus the general principles of Bacon gave towards that almost universal ascendancy of the analytical philosophy during the last century. I thoroughly believe, however, with an eminent French writer, that had he foreseen the fatal consequences of its misapplication to metaphysical and ethical enquiry, he would have taken care to qualify or limit his sanction of its use. For the practical mischief has been wrought, not by the great founder of experimentalism, but by the misusers of his principles,—in England, by Locke, Paley, and Bentham, and in France, by Helvetius, Diderot, and Voltaire. Well might the eloquent mourner of its ill effects, whom I have referred to, exclaim:—"it would turn thought into sensation, morality into self-interest, nature into mechanism; its tendency is to degrade all things."—MADAME DE STAËL'S *Germany*, vol. ii.

²¹ "Il ira loin—il croit," was the just prognostic of Mirabeau regarding one, who though then obscure and friendless, was destined not many years afterwards to sway for a brief but memorable season the destinies of France.

that the worst of all self-wrongs is the disbelief of spiritual obligations.

There is a topic usually dwelt upon in discourses like the present, upon which I mean to say but little. I allude to individual heroism. 'Tis not that I would have you think lightly of great proofs of personal energy, fortitude, and selflessness; I believe you cannot think too much of them. But I sometimes feel as if we laid a too exclusive stress upon the great qualities and performances of individuals, and too little upon those of nations. I do not want you thus to disparage Leonidas, but I ask you to be just to his three hundred equals,²² for such assuredly they were, in soul as well as privilege.²³ Had they not

²² "The powers of the kings of Sparta were inconsiderable as compared with their dignity and honours. They were members of the Gerusia (House of Peers) but as such they had only single votes. * * The greater part of the king's prerogative was in foreign affairs. As soon as he had assumed the command of the army, and had crossed the boundaries, he became general with unlimited power. But on his return he was always responsible and liable to punishment, as well for an imprudent as a tyrannical use of his powers. He was not permitted to conclude treaties, or decide the fate of cities, without permission from the state. * * On the whole, his station with regard to the nobles was that of an *equal*."—MULLER'S Dorians, iii. 6.

²³ "They were the flower of Spartan chivalry, and specially chosen to accompany Leonidas on his devoted errand."—HERODOTUS, vii. 205. "Of two survivors of the fatal day, one only would accept mercy from the conquerors."—Idem. 229.

been so, that lion-hearted king would have had no business at the gates of Greece, jesting with death²⁴: had they not been so, we should have never heard of either him or them. And to show forth this, and how it came so to pass there and not elsewhere, is the chief of history's missions,—one of the great things it has been sent to tell. This is its true function,—to cheer on the future by the experience of the past,—to saw through the bars of our despair,—to prophesy what nations may be, by picturing what nations have been. This is its office and its end; and that which leaves this unfulfilled is not history.

There are men, I am aware, who talk of historical study—as indeed they are apt to do of all education, as if the good of it were to teach ambition how to climb more nimbly and securely, over the heads of men. And it must be owned, that if the spirit of history were to be held answerable for all the apocrypha that bear its name, its general title might fairly be—"the political pickpocket's companion." But ere we part company in this place, I trust you will see, that the

²⁴ "While they were preparing for the last day's struggle, he bid his comrades dine heartily, as they should sup that night with Pluto."—
PLUTARCH.

genuine utterances of the historic spirit are infallibly distinguishable from all counterfeits of them, by this (among other) indelible signs,—that they speak of the many unto the many, and not of the adventurous few, or for their incitement or ambition.

It is happy too for us, that modern society holds out daily fainter hopes to personages of this description. Homeric times are gone, never to return. Achillean valour would make small difference on a European battle plain. Did ever hero dipped in Styx, beard death with more immortal scorn than Ney at Waterloo? Yet what availed it? Simply and merely, nothing. He could not break or bend one rank of Irish infantry.²⁵ It is the heroism of the many that decides the fate of empires now.

Genius is genial still,—heroism is heroic still, but their functions are other than they were; and they are so, because mankind are ceasing to be bundles of chips in a few state carpenters' shops. The deep-hearted, earnest, self-adequate, creative man will guide and govern, while the world standeth. But to govern without guiding,

²⁵ GURWOOD'S Despatches, vol. xii.

—to impel without absorbing the minds of men, is growing harder every day. Xerxes had to flog his soldiers to the charge,²⁶ against a single corps of Greeks ; Napoleon ran ahead waving a little crimson riband²⁷ in his hand, and all France enthusiastically followed him. What could a whip have done for him ? He had discerned that “the moral was become to the physical force in war, as more than three to one.”²⁸ This destiny seems to have come in upon us, as it were, on every side. Peace and war are not, avowedly at least, determined now, by the humour of a king’s mistress,²⁹ or the cabals of an affronted courtier.³⁰ These have their schemings still, but their traffic has been declared contraband, whereas of yore it lewdly brokered the interests, and weal, and dignity of nations, before their very eyes.³¹ Public opinion has got a

²⁶ Herodotus, vii. 223.

²⁷ The cordon of the Legion of Honour.

²⁸ *Las Cases*.

²⁹ The whole disgraceful reign of Charles II. is described and accounted for in the bitter phrase of one, who witnessed and deplored its infamy;—“He is governed by his lust, and the women and rogues about him.”—*EVELYN’S Diary*. Louis XV. plunged his kingdom into the ruinous war of 1756, to gratify the anger of Madame de Pompadour, who had been pointed at in an epigram.

³⁰ *COXE’S Marlborough*.

³¹ *Private Life of Louis XV.* vol. iv. 133, et seq.

voice,—sometimes a very loud and rough one,—in public concerns now. Some decent show of sanction must be somehow had from it, ere the folly or the crime is ventured on. Our fathers were liable to the stocks, or worse, for objecting to being robbed ; we have the privilege of withholding our consent, and thus we must be duped into acquiescence in our own undoing. This too is something.

Now it is for the sake of educating this new and mighty element of opinion, that I advocate the use and study of history. Does opinion need no schooling? Do its hopes and fears, its expectations and its recollections need no teaching? How is it to be saved from the vanity of its own ignorance, inexperience, and credulity? Were it not of infinite importance that it should thoroughly understand whence it rose, and how it grew; why it is strong, and by what means it may become weak? Is it not our obvious duty to guard against its being undermined, by clearing around its foundations?

It is too late in the day to consider, whether public opinion shall be asked upon public concerns. Public opinion will find an utterance for itself on all those things which it has learned to

look upon as its own, whether great folks ask it or no. If statesmen omit to ask opinion, opinion will ask and answer for itself,—more than, till it came to answer, it perhaps was dreaming of, or than having deliberately thought out in its many-brained head, it thoroughly understands. Be this fortunate or the reverse, it obviously is so; and being so, our business is to deal with the necessities of our time forethoughtfully. We have good cause to fear half-knowledge; we have the strongest motives urging us to see, that as men will learn something, that something should be sound; that as they will learn, they should have the means of learning enough,—enough for reasonable self-reliance, and at the same time reasonable forbearance towards others. Depend on it, the most unhappy condition of modern society, is that in which the many have just education enough to render them suspicious, and not enough to justify them in feeling confidence in themselves. It is vain that any genius, energy, or virtue in the few tries to serve such a people. You may guide a dark man; but who can lead one that fancies he is fit to steer himself, and yet sees nothing truly or distinctly? Such a state is the prey to interminable suspi-

picious; and "suspicions among thoughts are like bats among birds, they always fly by twilight."³² Fear is the cruellest of master passions, and that intellectual twilight which may not incorrectly be termed educated ignorance, is the congenial dwelling-place of popular suspicion. There is no remedy for this debasing, self-tormenting fear, but in that improvement of popular education whereof the cultivation of history must be an essential part.

From whatever point of view the matter is regarded, therefore, the popular Use and Study of History seems to be no longer optional. Few as there are amongst us, with whom it forms any deliberate portion of their mental culture, they are already too numerous to make it safe for the rest of us to dally in our ignorance. Remember how that accursed witchery of illiterate times—the art of magic, rose. A few men given to study and the exploring of nature's secrets, were tempted by the irresponsible power their discoveries gave them, at first to play with, and at last to trade on the credulity of the multitude. The secrets were not secrets of nature's whispering,

³² Bacon.

but of the uneducated Chaldeans and Egyptians, in classic times, and of the equally ignorant European populace in later ages. The astrologers and magicians were probably neither worse or subtler men, than are at all times to be found. They were merely men corrupted by the most beguiling of temptations,—irresponsible power. They sat down to study natural science as a part—a just and noble part of natural theology; and they came forth not priests, but politicians. From reciting the words of oracles and tending the services of the altar, we find these men of peculiar knowledge absorbing almost regal power, and bearing rule over men by the authority of that knowledge.³³

Think of what temperament, of what thirsting energy, of what self-lit ideality, a few men must necessarily be, who in an unintelligent time devote themselves to the pursuit of “occult scien-

³³ “The priesthood of Egypt,” says Heeren, “ranked next to the kings, and enjoyed nearly equal advantages. * * But they did not continue the ruling race, merely because from them were chosen the servants of the state, but much rather because they monopolized every branch of scientific knowledge, which had reference to the immediate wants of the people. We must banish the idea that their sole or most usual employment was the service of the gods. They were judges, physicians, soothsayers, architects, in short, every thing in which scientific knowledge was required.”—Hist. Res.: Egyptians, chap. ii.

ces." Occult ? Yes, were they not truly such ? The outer facts were indeed " manifest, their causes only being occult ;"³⁴ but then the recognitions of these causes were lights so far apart, as to be mutually indiscernible, and all the midway between was the stolid, trembling, darkness. Think then, what spirit could have dared that sympathyless way, or what could have sustained men through its rugged dreariness, save the bold curiosity of genius ?

And dost thou ask, why in this breast
The fearful heart is not at rest ?
From living nature hast thou fled
To dwell 'mong fragments of the dead ;
Hast chosen to pore o'er mouldering bones
Of brute and human skeletons ?
To ponder here o'er spells and signs,
Symbolic letters, circles, lines ?

* * * *

That from some spirit I might hear
Deep truths, to others unrevealed,
And mysteries from mankind sealed.
Oh ! for a glance into the earth !
To see below its dark foundations—
Life's embryo seeds before their birth,
And nature's silent operations.

* * * *

³⁴ NEWTON'S Optics.

Ha! what new life divine, intense,
Floods in a moment every sense?
The tumults of my soul are stilled—
My withered heart with rapture filled;
The secret powers that nature mould,
Their essence and their acts unfold.
Am I a god? Can mortal sight
Enjoy—endure this burst of light?³⁵

The novelty and excitement of the search sufficed in the beginning for a reward: this was in the green unsordid time of science. But when the inward impulse grew relaxed by age, and men began to find miraculous gifts imputed to them,—weariness, contempt perhaps, and doubtless also that ambition to bear rule, that lies coiled round the hearts of even the best of men,—beguiled them to accept the golden diadem which ignorance had beggared itself to proffer, instead of the true but unvalued crown, every thorn of which had in the gathering cost heroic pains. In despair of recognition, genius in ignorant times turned charlatan. I say not that every astrologer was a man of genius; but I am sure that many of them were: how else had they ever come at all they knew?³⁶ And assuredly

³⁵ Faust: ANSTER'S Translation.

³⁶ "We may ascribe to the Egyptians much science, especially in phy-

they knew much.³⁷ But the pursuit of knowledge once outbid by the popularity and profit of its fraud-dressed exhibition,—adroit display became the unhallowed end, and fame was bartered for applause. Unprofitable science was abandoned for the lucrative knack; and the world fell down in abject homage, before the wands of alchemy and witchcraft!³⁸

The sound and real knowledge, which had been the primary foundation of so much that was corrupting and corrupt, was by degrees forgotten. Its miserable false prophets could not always impose on the common sense, which lies latent in the darkest and most degraded of mankind, and an occasional spark from which, will be struck forth by the stealthiest hoof of superstition. 'Twas easy for the sceptic bystander to laugh at the detected fraud: but poor trembling igno-

sics, more perhaps than even the Greeks learned to borrow of them. But this was not exempt from a gross alloy of that capital error—magic, which was a dark perversion and illicit application of the high powers of nature, when these were really understood, and the mind, penetrating her external veil, had caught the spirit of her inner life.”—FREDERICK SCHLEGEL's Lectures on History, vol. i. 7.

³⁷ Edinb. Encycl. Art. (History of) Astronomy.

³⁸ Pausanias, who wrote about the middle of the second century, tells us that he had himself seen men, who could avert tempests by their incantations: vol. ii. 34. See also v. 27, where he narrates other marvels.

rance could not laugh; it pointed still to much that was truly marvellous, and, as it said, supernatural.³⁹ There was no other way of solving the enigmatic medley of genuine marvel and blundered legerdemain, than by ascribing all to the treacherous agency of the infernal powers. The rulers of classical⁴⁰ and feudal times,⁴¹ took their revenge upon the men of peculiar knowledge, in torturings and death.⁴² Whereupon the magicians raised the price of their spells; and the wretched struggle was prolonged, until—we may well hang down our progress-vaunting heads to

³⁹ See the varied illustrations and anecdotes in Brewster's charming *Letters on Natural Magic*.

⁴⁰ See the account given by Tacitus, of the execution of two persons at Rome, for having attempted by their arts to raise the dead. He mentions that at the same time "all *mathematicians and magicians* were banished from Italy by a decree of the senate."—*Ann.* ii. 27, 28, 32.—The Persian Magi whose unfortunate advice Astyages pursued regarding Cyrus, were crucified.—*HERODOTUS*, i. 128.

⁴¹ In the introduction to his sapient work on *Dæmonology*, King James I. declares that "the fearful abounding in his time, in England, of those detestable slaves of the devil, the Enchanters, moved him to dispatch in post his treatise, to resolve thereby the doubting hearts of many, both that such assaults of Satan are most certainly practised, and that the instruments thereof merit most severely to be punished."

⁴² Inhuman ingenuity has been exhausted among all nations, in devising punishments for the luckless adventurers in contraband knowledge. The Roman penalty for magic was "to strip the offender naked, and having fastened his head within a forked stake, to scourge him till he died."—*SUETONIUS*, in *Ner.* 49. The Scythians believed in the wisdom of their diviners; but whenever these were convicted of deceit, they were burned to death.—*HERODOTUS*, iv. 69.

think—how short a time ago !⁴³ 'Tis not a century and a half, since the public tribunals of all christendom were accustomed to decree, and public opinion to approve, the sentence of *death* for sorcery, fortune-telling, converse with familiar spirits, and the like.⁴⁴

There are few places now in Europe or America, where a magic lantern, or a phosphoric phantasmagoria would keep three old women from sound dreams ; yet there was a time when a man who dared to trifle with his audience,—to dramatize, if I may be allowed the expression, the ideas of Roger Bacon,—would be judicially informed that he had not long to live. And what has wrought this humanizing change ? What has saved the senators and judges of our day, from the guilt of shedding innocent blood ?

⁴³ Laws against astrology, magic, &c. encumbered the statute-books of every realm in Europe, until Louis XIV. set the example of obliterating their merciless provisions. It was only by the 9th George II. ch. 5, that prosecutions for enchantment, divination, and the rest of these imaginary crimes, were put an end to in Great Britain.—BLACKSTONE, iv. b. 4 chap.

⁴⁴ In Hutchinson's History of Massachusetts, there is a detailed account of the trial and execution in 1692, of several persons, under different circumstances, and in different places, for witchcraft.—ii. vol. 1 chap. The last execution for witchcraft, in England, was in the year 1722 ; (Edinb. Encycl. Art. Witchcraft.) and a poor woman was burnt to death at Wartzburg in Germany, upon an accusation of the like nature, in 1748.—Commentary on Beccaria, chap. ix.

What has enabled us to learn with cheerfulness instead of trembling,—with boyhood's gay bold heart of curiosity, instead of old age's all-suspecting and door-bolting fear,—the laws of harmony, analogy, and beauty, that hold the mighty fabric of this outer world together? What but the popularization of physical knowledge,—the multiplication of cheap and intelligible books,—the existence of such institutions as that within whose halls we now are gathered?⁴⁵ This is the true progress of society,—the lasting and real emancipation of the many, from that most base of thraldoms,—the thraldom of their own ignorance and fears.

Now I ask you to do for History, what has already been done for Natural Philosophy. You cannot leave the secrets of experience in the hands of a few, with safety either to them or to yourselves. The case is urgent, peremptory. Exclusive knowledge is exclusive power; and exclusive power is tyranny in terms. Would you think yourselves free men, if you did not know what your rulers were doing in your name? Would you yield obedience to the laws, if those

⁴⁵ The Mechanics' Institute.

laws were secret, quoted or quotable at will, by every judge who tried you? No; I address citizens of a free state; and men of all parties, sects, and ranks who hear me, will heartily, I know, admit these postulates of freedom.

Say not that a knowledge of times past, is no part of the information indispensable for the conduct of to-day. Every statute of the realm, every privilege you enjoy, every institution whose vigour you admire, or whose decay you mourn, every custom and usage of society whose traditional sanction you obey, is but a rootless bramble flung, you know not whence or when, in the way of your free will, until you learn by whom and for what it was planted, and how and why it was suffered to grow up over the heads of your fathers. If you want to understand what you are as civilized men, and how you come to be as you find yourselves,—if you would feel a reasoned confidence in the stability of what is good around you, and a sober, calm, unchildish hope that what is evil in your condition, is not immitigable, inevitable, everlasting,—you must learn to use and to study history. 'Tis not safe for you to leave such knowledge to the few of peculiar energy and inquisitiveness? When from

the chambers of the Past, (whose windows you will not open—whose treasures you will not share,) these few come forth, and find that any recital of what they have seen therein, will sound credible in your indiscriminating ears,—where is your guarantee, that these irresponsible interpreters of the truth, which it behoves you so imperatively to know for yourselves, will interpret truly? They are fallible, temptible, frail; think of your ignorance which is their irresponsibility; remember how the evils of astrology and magic rose,—and tremble at the danger of exclusive historic knowledge.

But I shall be asked, (I have been asked,) what does the working man need of history? Has he temper or leisure to study it with advantage?

If I could bring myself to look upon the working man as “my brother only in the flesh,”—if I could forget that our brotherhood has reference more—far, infinitely more—to the everlasting spirit that is in him and me, than to the perishable clay whereout we both are made,—if I were a proselyte of that politico-economic school, which divides mankind into their pursuits for bread,—the productive uses whereunto their

hands and tongues are variously applied,—I might concede, (though even then, I should not be convinced,) that beyond what served to perfect one in his sustenance-craft, all knowledge, thought, and study, were a waste of time. But I hold no terms with such soul-deadening “philosophy falsely so called.” It never would occur to me to define man to be “an animal that makes exchanges.”⁴⁶ I believe that the political position of every man, and the social position of every man, how lofty or how humble soever it may be, is indissolubly linked with his ultimate and permanent position as a moral being; and I regard that moral being, in its importance to his fellow men, as immeasurably beyond and above the utmost mercantile results of his handicraft, his ingenuity, his thrift, or his expenditure. He is a good man, or a bad man; he is a taint upon his country’s mind, or a throb of hope in its great heart; he is a health, a strength, an energy, a stay, in the collective spirit of his people, or he is a blemish, a defect, a wound therein. And if it be upon the vigour and the soundness of that spirit,—upon the moral sum of all these moral

⁴⁶ Introductory Lectures on Political Economy by Dr. Whately, p. 7.

items,—that the wellbeing of a state depends,—how can it comport with the security of the whole, that any great or essential portion should remain unformed, untaught, unlifted up, from the daily drudgery of the life-scuffle for food?

Cankered as the monetary ties 'twixt man and man are grown,—jealous as capital is instinctively, with regard to its safety,—suspicious as labour naturally is of its insensible employer,—with usury griping at its throat, and machinery deafening all expostulation with its iron roar of improvement,—the life of industry has come to be no better than a permanent state of war,—with the gains and the glories, now and then, of war, but never without its hazards, its losses, its selfishness, its unnumbered miseries and broken hearts. 'Twas not—'twas not for *this and nothing else*,—'twas not to dance this death-round without pause, or rest, or breathing time,—that you, or any one of you, were made. Man is not fitted by his nature, to spend an uninterrupted existence in the mad-house of toil. Mad with avarice, or mad with loathing,—mad with the hell-hope of a golden coffin, or mad with vexation and despair, he must grow, if no other thoughts or things interrupt the monotony of labour. He

may preserve his outward health, if he be of singularly robust constitution; he may thrive apace, flourish, and do well in trade; but himself, as a moral being, he has ceased to be. His value to society around him is destroyed. He cannot cheer another, who is cheerless in his own heart; he cannot sympathise with the generosity, enjoy the mirth, share in the sorrow, or love the worth of those around him, who is engrossed by any one mechanical routine, and the eternally recurring thoughts connected with it. Heaven forbid that I should say to you—be less industrious than you are. I am sure your happiness depends upon your being able and willing to earn, each of you, an independent livelihood, by the sweat of your brow; but not by the sweat of your heart. I would have the working man the master of his toil, and not its slave. I would never wish him to neglect his business, but still less would I have him, for business' sake, forget himself—that spiritual, immortal self, for which he is accountable. Let him remember that he is a workman, but let him never forget that he is a man.

Now I do not know of any means—excepting always the ordinances of religion—more gene-

rally adapted to the good purpose, of recalling men from the artificial and transitory employments of life, to a recollection of their better nature and destiny, than the subject of our enquiries here.

Look also at the matter, in another point of view. Historic notions and opinions are every day infusing themselves more and more, into the daily bread of literature. You do'n't study history, but many of you read those innutritious confections, that are sold in the shops as Historical novels. Think, I beseech you, what sort of intellectual diet, the generality of such compositions are. Think of their origin,—their inspiration,—the sole cause of their being put together, and exposed for sale. What is it? Merely and miserably the want of thirty guineas, and the unfortunate facility of manufacturing—(which means a putting together with the *hand*—not with the head)—what will bring that sum in the great wholesale market, whence circulating libraries are supplied all the year round. Historical novelists are now a separate trade.

And mark,—the very portion of history these are most apt to settle on, are the most easily spoiled. Go with one of these guides, and with

the easy assurance of a familiar visitant, he will lead you into the cabinet of the illustrious statesman,—make him talk to you without reserve,—show you the contents hitherto unpublished of his secret drawers,—reveal to you the hidden springs of all his policy, and reconcile, in the apologetic way, all seeming inconsistencies of character and conduct :—how extremely interesting ! Or, you are led through the clamorous crowd of some long silent city, and permitted to overhear their gossippings,—the very kernel of true history when we can really come at it ; and you are telescopically shown the million-tinted scene, the indistinct result of all whose lights and shadows, is alone discernible to ordinary eyes. So you read on till bed-time, much amused, and too good natured to enquire,—or, it may be, with a shrewd suspicion that there were small use in asking,—the authority for all this : and thus your memory is suffered to absorb, indolently and almost unconsciously, a monstrous mass of flatulent, unwholesome, poisonous stuff, about historical events and personages.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ It can hardly be doubted that Sir W. Scott's wonderful success in the field of historic fiction, has been the exciting cause of our many subsequent misfortunes there. Epic prose—though by universal accla-

What—do you seriously accuse popular novelists, with deliberate perversion of the truth of history, for some dark purpose of their own? By no means. I am not one of those, who look for malignant, or dark-lantern motive in every thing that is mischievous or questionable in the world. I am satisfied that ten times more of what is false, idle, and absurd, is said, and done, and written, *without* deliberate aim or purpose, than with it. But this does not render mischief a whit less mischievous, or less deplorable.⁴⁸ Your *thirty-guineas-a-volume* man does not know, and does not care, whether his feudal chief or Middle-ages burgher is like the reality, or not. Why should he? He knows too well that you are quite as ignorant, or probably rather more so than himself. He has read little, but then you have read less. Is he flogged for his anachronisms in a review? That only serves for an

mation he has proved himself its Shakespeare—is, however, of no recent origin. Both among the Greeks, the Orientals, and the Gothic nations, imaginative composition sought to run by the sober way side of history; and with its lighter step and more fanciful costume, tendered its homage to the warrior and the sage. It has ever been one of the most influential modes of reaching the popular mind, and it will ever be so; *therefore*, let us resist the mercenary mob who would degrade and vulgarize its name.

⁴⁸ "Perhaps a man cannot be thoroughly mischievous, unless he is honest."—GRANVILLE SHARPE.

advertisement, and provokes a second edition. So long as history is neglected by the many, history will be tampered with, by the few,—stolen by them with impunity, and sold out again to the rightful owners, at smuggler's profit.

'Tis idle to inveigh against such men as a class. The blame lies truly with ourselves, rather than with them. What would you have them do? The men must live. They would offer to write histories for you, instead of unromantic romances with historical titles, if you would buy the latter instead of the former,—if you sought only what might really do you good, instead of wasting your time, and faculties, and money, in literary dram-drinking. Whether the wights who drive a lucrative trade in brewing and vending such soul-rotting liquors, would be good for much as historians, we shall have a more fitting opportunity for considering, when we come to examine what manner of man an historian ought to be. Here I would only take leave to intimate, that while disposed to rank the qualities of the true historian sufficiently high, I am inclined to look on the creative genius of fiction, as higher and rarer still. But as mere narration,—nor indeed mere anything that can be easily designated or

described—is not history, so neither does a plot, a hero, a heroine, incidents, with the usual number of sunrises, storms, lowering skies, sunsets and clear moonlights, though all got up in the best manner, and given to the world with a fashionable *imprimatur*,—constitute fiction. Far from dissuading you from the reading of real epic or dramatic fiction, I believe it to be wholly indispensable. But I pray you let your fiction and your history be drawn as privileged draughts from chosen springs, not drunk up indiscriminately from any land-drain that you are told is a well-head.

There have always been among learned and reflecting men, two different theories of history; perhaps 'twere more correct to say, two opposing doctrines of history; with both of these,—at least so far as to be able to distinguish clearly between their contrary drift and tendency,—it is right that you should be acquainted. They both are founded on the conviction, that society has made and is making undeniable progress in a great variety of ways; that invention has, since Bacon's time, been like one, who, having been born blind, now seeth clearly; that discovery, instead of crawling on the ground, or skimming

diffidently some inland sea, has taken to itself wings, mounts like the newly-fledged eagle mid the powers of the air, and ploughs with its irresistible talons, the bosom of the unfathomed deep. Physical impossibility, like a scared phantom, has begun to fade from the minds of men ; “many run to and fro and knowledge is increased.”

Giddied with the whirl and tumult of all this novelty, some are satisfied to base their philosophy of history thereon, and thereamid ; and these, elate with the impatient and not ignoble hope of a still higher speed of improvement, and believing that a more uninterrupted progress is yet in store for us, lay down for the future the horoscope of human perfectability ; and by way of rendering their theory cavil proof, endeavour to demonstrate from the chronicles of the past, that the world has, from an infinitely dull and brutish beginning, been steadily and regularly progressing. This, (without meaning the phrase invidiously,) I may call the *materialism* of history.

The opposite doctrine acknowledges the truth of the facts, whereon the other builds so confidently ; but it refuses to set on them so high a value, or to adopt them as the corner-stones of

its philosophy. It denies that history can be read consecutively, by any winking taper of chronologic criticism, nor even by a whole encyclopedia of flambeaux, all of first rate size and brilliancy. It frankly owns that it can make the annals of the past fit no rectangular theory of progress. Something here and something there,—in this quarter much and in that quarter little,—it believes indeed that it *does* rightly understand : but a great deal more it honestly avows it cannot comprehend. Paris can give it no solution of many—of innumerable doubts. Could it *first* get the crack theory into its head,—why then, perhaps, the difficulties might vanish away. But having an invincible distrust of show-boxes, it wont shut one eye and look in with the other,—though the price of the grand exhibition was never so cheap before. It holds to the persuasion, that *both* its eyes were given to it for some good purpose ; and that the duty of keeping in view all that we *cannot* understand, is quite as imperative, as the directing our faculties to the objects which *it is* permitted us to appreciate. It feels like the wise man, who said after all his discoveries, that he had picked up only a few pebbles on the strand of time, while the mighty

ocean of things lay outstretched before him, —immeasurable, untameable, incomprehensible. It has no curt answer to the questionings of the past ; it has no closely fitting counterpart to suit the future. It believes that until the fundamental mystery of good and evil shall be solved, —its historic forms of national prosperity and suffering,—freedom and slavery,—peace and war, —purity and corruption, must continue to be seen “as through a glass darkly.” But it can afford to be content without the knowledge which is too wonderful for its grasp, satisfied that the mighty conflict of human passions, acts, and motives, is part of the mystic development of an allwise government of the world,—all wise, though the finite cannot span the infinite,—all just, though it doth not tabularly square with our preconceptions. It knows that it is A GOD, who judgeth the earth ; and feeling that history is, so to speak, but a partial avowal of the designs of the Mighty One,—it believes that no interpretation, however confident or erudite, can be safely credited as a certain and unerring guide. This may be called the *spiritualism* of history.

Need I hesitate to say to you, my friends, that for myself, I am thoroughly devoted to the latter

doctrine. It seems to me one in no way incompatible with earnest enquiry, deep research, and the most anxious desire to turn to account every advance in human knowledge. It is manifestly our duty to set before our eyes daily a very high, or, if you will, the highest imaginable standard of improvement ; to labour sedulously to apply all the lessons of experience to good purpose, using them always as moral *points d'appui*—means to new discovery and still further advancement. And if optimism implies no more than a practical assertion of our capacity for infinite amelioration, and our unquenchable desire for it,—I too am an optimist. This unshackled and unbounded sense of good attainable, is the vital spark of intellectual life,—the very soul of progress. And considering that after we have done our utmost, we shall not attain to any very dangerous pinnacle of wisdom, it is well that the theoretic standard should be very high, lest the practical level of improvement be very low. The seaman keeps his eye upon the stars, not dreaming that he will ever reach them ; but he knows that while his course is set by their immutable light, it cannot be far astray. This is the optimism of common sense ; which while

it looks to lofty aims, bids us remember that we are but dust.

Do all, then, that can be done, for the future ; but condemn not the admonitions of the past. Listen to all the promises of young Knowledge, but despise not the counsels of the old man—History. Be not too sure that every thing that looks novel, is really new.

For my own part, I am disposed to think that if we had a more perfect insight into the enlightenment of antiquity, we should probably discover a multitude of old truths, already hewn and quarried there, which we take vast credit to ourselves for being the first to light upon. And as regards those matters, wherewith history is more especially conversant,—the arts, the domestic habits, the public works, the laws, the social institutions, and the civil discipline of ancient times,—we know quite enough to fill us in many signal instances—not with vanity at our progress, but shame at our degeneracy.⁴⁹ And as to the great interests of mankind—the security,

⁴⁹ How miserably, for example, do our tardy and still half-hearted attempts at popular education, contrast with the systems of Persia and of Athens in their better days?—XENOPHON, *Cyrop.* i. ii.—HERODOTUS, i. 137, et seq.—PLUTARCH, *Vit. Solon*, &c.

the enjoyment, the accomplishments, the general happiness of the many,—I am very, very far indeed from thinking, that the balance could be easily struck in many cases.

Has there been *no* progress then? Yes, I should say, much. But it has not been according to those rules of perspective, our ignorance of what is remote would falsely lead us to imagine. What is near we can appreciate without effort; that which is afar off we cannot see at all without effort, and even then but imperfectly. When you compare modern times with ancient, bear this ineradicable defect of your own vision always in mind; otherwise you will continually err. Might it not be well, if you would sometimes try to look at familiar objects, as from a distance; to turn the telescope of time the wrong way? How shrunk would the dimensions of your grandest notabilities appear! You would find, on a really fair comparison, that the weapons of the world-strife are altered, but that the great causes of quarrel and inquietude remain unchanged.

We have many new elements of society, but very few new rights;—our tools and implements

of acquisition are sharper, and better finished in the handles, than those of Corinth or Phœnicia ; but can we eat more gold when we have got it, than they ? Are we better or happier—are we even richer, for three centuries of ransacking the treasures and mines of an entire New world ?

Three inventions have, nevertheless, made obsolete many of the world's ways,—the magnet, gunpowder, and steam. Compared with the outward changes these have wrought, other advances in human knowledge look like nothing. Yet it is hardly too much to say, that the sum of local happiness is less affected by the results of all these put together, than by the abolition of slavery in the West Indies, or the progress of temperate habits in our own country.

To estimate the real value of what we have, it is necessary to know how the want of it was dispensed with. You seemed to agree with me, in estimating the importance of the discoveries I have alluded to ; perhaps we may agree likewise in our notion of the importance of another, which I have not hitherto named—I mean the invention of printing. Do you ask me what is my estimate of that ? I say freely, I can not tell. It baffles my utmost imagination to conceive the

practical amount of the difference, which that one discovery has made in the constitution of society. To say that it is worth more than all the rest, seems to me but trifling. But this is certain, that whoever would form accurate ideas of what the printing-press has done for the world, must first be sure he understands what it was to live in a world without printing.

Whether then the annals of the world lead you to the conviction, that history is but the narrative of similar cycles, or, the turned over leaves of infinite progression, or as I am individually persuaded it is, a tale full of instruction, and wonder, and power, neither lightly to be disregarded nor arbitrarily dealt with,—still I would urge you to read and think of history. And remember that its legitimate use is not the abolishing doubt and obscurity, and making us fancy ourselves in an ever brightening, never clouding daylight of wisdom,—but that with fitful voice it helps to tell us, how far upon the way of human fate we are come:—’tis the tongue of the great bell of time, tolling the night watches and the morning hours.

Of the eventual destiny that is in store for man, I have no fears. I will own to you, more-

over, that in looking over the map of time, I have great hopes for our own long stricken, but I firmly believe, uprising land. I dream sometimes that I shall not die, until I behold the moral and social redemption of my people. History says it may be done, for history shows that harder things have been done elsewhere. But, my friends, if my reading of these beckonings of hope, these assurances of history, that kindlier days for our country are approaching,—should these, as regards their immediate realization, prove erroneous, shall I therefore distrust the wisdom of Him, in whose estimation “one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day?” Ah, no; I still would trust in Him, and hope for you; the more, because, if I know the heart of Ireland, I have the fixed conviction that our country can never be an unbelieving land. My countrymen, thank God every day you live, that it is so. You may differ about the texture of the cables that hold you to belief; but so long as that sheet anchor remains firm, I never will despair;—were I dying to night, I should not die doubting;—your faith in God is my hope for our country.

Need I in conclusion say to you then,—read

history in a reverent and believing spirit. It is—it is a solemn thing—this track of a world's destiny in the sands of time. With Frederic Schlegel I will warn you, that “history presents
“a mass of stubborn facts, which agree not with
“any abstract law of progress ; and that on the
“contrary, the annals not of particular nations
“only, but of whole periods of the world, seem
“to indicate a circuitous march of humanity, if
“not a retrogressive one ; and the historical
“enquirer who starts from this development of
“the law of humanity, because it disconcerts his
“theory, wrecks in his blind indignation the
“truth alike of the future and the past, by the
“false light of the passionate spirit of the
“time.”⁵⁰

Better far is the ennobling persuasion that all the mutations of human fate, all that riddle of suffering and error, intermixed as it is with glorious lessons of encouragement, which together in their now apparently inextricable fusion we call *history*,—will yet be found equally working out one good, great, glorious end :—what end ?—“the self-taught perfectibility of man,”—saith

⁵⁰ Lectures on History, vol. i.

materialism ;—the bringing back of man to purity and peace, say we—the restoration of the lost image of truth, wherein at the beginning he was made.

II.

WHAT IS HISTORY ?

— ὅσοι δὲ βουλήσονται τῶν τε γενομένων τὸ σαφὲς σκοπεῖν, καὶ τῶν μελλόντων ποτὲ αὖθις, κατὰ τὸ ἀνθρώπειον, τοιούτων ὄντων καὶ παραπλησίων ἔσεσθαι, ὠφέλιμα κρίνειν αὐτά, ἀρκούντως ἔξει.

THUCYDIDES, i. 22.

WE have here to ask and answers three questions ;—what is History ?—what is not History ?—and what is the difference between the two ?

History may be called the story of a life. It may be the life of a nomade tribe, a peculiar sect, or a free nation. Whatever has within itself a human life, a characteristic, vivid, active unity of purpose or condition,—is capable of history ; but as such life is indispensable and essential, in the object of history, so history itself must be life-like and living. 'Tis for this reason that I call history, the story of a life.

The word History among the Greeks was well

fitted to remind both the writer and the reader, of what it ought to be. History literally meant *the making another to know a thing as perfectly as you know it yourself*; and the word historian literally meant a *faithful witness of the truth*.¹ There is much implied in that phrase, "to know." To believe is one thing, to guess is another, to suppose, conjecture, take for granted, or superficially to form an acquaintance with,—all this is far from to *know*.

The story of a life must be told, before you can be said really to know a man. You may be on very good terms with him; you may be long acquainted with him; acts of civility may pass between you; but if you are ignorant of his previous habits, way of life, not what he passes for merely, but what he really is,—if, as we say, you are ignorant of his history, you cannot feel sure that you *know* him.

So it is with nations. You must learn the story of their life, before you can be sure you understand them, or are competent to judge of their character, temper, worth, or disposition. You travel with a friend past a large house; you see

¹ STEPHANI Thes. Grec. iv. 3548.

its aspect, its plantations, its extent, its look out, its apparent age and strength. Who lives there? People whose name is French. And what sort of folk are they? Really I don't know. How,—did you never hear of them before? Oh, yes, often; I've seen some of them frequently; shaken hands with others of them now and then; I've drank some of their wine on certain occasions; but to be candid with you, I do not *know* them.

Is not this a literal account of our ignorance regarding a neighbouring family, about thirty-three millions in number, whose place of abode, whose appearance and prospects, whose strength, and whose domain we are tolerably familiar with. We cannot say we know the French. We have no recognition of them;—no cognizance of their spirit. Have we any idea how they would look at our concerns, or we at theirs? None whatever. When you know a man, you say—Ah, I am sure he'd think as I do: but you must know him to say this.

The history of the Tartars² has been written,

² There is a curious translation of the history of the Tartars, by Abul Ghazi Khan: London, 1730. A more generally accessible account may be found in MALTE BRUN, xxxvi.

the history of the Puritans³ has been written, the history of England has been written. What are these histories ? Chronicles of the desert, the dungeon, or the loom, merely ? Inventories of all the tent-furniture of the one, or all the controversies waged by the other, or all the fabrics woven by the third. Assuredly no. These are but the accidents of the outer life of each, and aid us in nowise towards reaching the inward spirit which animated them.

Thus it is obvious that to know the outer half of their circumstances, though very useful and entertaining, is much less important than to *know* their character. Life is twofold. There is the physical existence, and the spiritual being. Climate, soil, agriculture, trade, manufactures, these are the elements of a nation's physical life, and these may be abundant where the true and healthy spirit is wholly wanting. Again, these may be comparatively speaking despicable, and that spirit may be great enough to change sterility to fruitfulness, a desert into a garden.

Look at Sicily and at Holland,—the most complete antithesis perhaps in Europe. The for-

³ NEAL'S celebrated work.

mer placed in the very gangway⁴ of ancient civilization, endowed with a soil whose fertility has passed into a proverb,⁵ girt around by the most navigable of seas, with coasts indented everywhere by natural harbours, exempt from any peculiar ill of climate,⁶ gladdened by the light of an unclouded sun,⁷ and occupied for ages by a numerous and intelligent people,⁸—in every physical requisite too great to be a tributary, yet morally never able to assert its right to nationhood. Here is a riddle.

Turn your eyes for a moment, now, to Holland—a country that, until the ninth century, was an undrained marsh. Great cities it had none; arable fields it had few; a fleet of fishing boats, three or four indifferent towns, no timber, and a scanty population,—these were its materials wherewith to go industrially to work—its capital wherewith in due time to set up in business for itself.⁹ It had neither great strength of position, military discipline, nor diplomatic expe-

⁴ HEEREN, *Hist. Res. Carthaginians*, ii. 3.

⁵ CICERO in *Verrem*. ii.—“Ille M. Cato sapiens cellam penariam “reipublicæ, nutricem plebis Romanæ Siciliam nominavit.”

⁶ POLYBIUS, ii. 5.

⁷ WACHSMUTH, i. 14.

⁸ HERODOTUS, vii. 245, et seq.

⁹ MALTE BRUN, cli.—*TEMPL: Account of the Netherlands*, ii. &c.

rience; but it had a heart, and that bid it hurl defiance at the greatest empire of the world;—that heart made Holland a nation.¹⁰ Here is another riddle.

Now history's business is to solve these riddles. Statistics cannot do it; statistics could only prove that Holland was scarce the size of Sicily; history whispers—true, but Holland had a mind of her own, and Sicily had not. History can, moreover, tell you of that mind, of what quality it was, how it grew from imperceptibility to form, how it acquired buoyancy, self-confidence, hope, ambition,—how its dreams became attempts,—its desires vigorous resolves,—its will a power invincible and free. It saw, that “the preservation and prosperity of a country depends on its having such a government, as is consonant with itself;”¹¹ and what it dared to see it did not fear to do. And history can show you how, for the want of such an indwelling and self-counselling spirit, Sicily has been trodden under foot of strangers, from Theocles¹² time till now.

¹⁰ SCHILLER'S outline of the rise of the republic.

¹¹ DE WITT'S *True History of Holland*, v.

¹² The leader of the first Greek colony on the island.—THUCYDIDES, i.

Poor Sicily,—her fate has been a luckless one from the beginning. Her early days, so far as they are known to us, appear to have been passed beneath the sway of the Phœnicians, whose mercenary impress was only effaced, by the sharp hand of the colonizing Greeks.¹³ Then the Carthaginians came;¹⁴ and last of all the Romans.¹⁵ As each of these foreign influences prevailed, alien ideas, interests, and sympathies arose. The hopes and fears of the country were continually bent in an outward direction. When any of the Greek settlers were in difficulty, they naturally looked towards their ancient home;¹⁶ and self-dependence cannot grow beneath the droppings from a too overshadowing bough. The Carthaginians seem to have founded and defended their possessions in the island, as commercial factories, and places of naval rendezvous.¹⁷ These were the outposts of African aggression, not the indigenous tokens of Sicilian opulence or power.

¹³ HERMANN. 83. § notes.

¹⁴ LIVY, iv. 29.

¹⁵ POLYBIUS, i. 5.

¹⁶ Thus the people of Zancle appealing to the Messenians for aid, were betrayed by the latter, and dispossessed of their "beautiful city," —THUCYDIDES. i.—which subsequently became subject to the Samians, —HERODOTUS, vi. 24.—under the altered name of Messana.—PAUSANIAS, iv. 23.

¹⁷ HEEREN, Hist. Res. Carthag. ii. 2.

The officious friendship of Rome took care to assimilate all distinctions, to its own tyrannic will. 'Twas the "Senate and Roman People" who accepted the treaty, whereby "the Carthaginians engaged to make war no more upon Hiero king of Syracuse, and to evacuate Sicily."¹⁸ Alas! it is of little consequence when matters come to this, which of the devils are cast out by the other. The stronger remains, and makes his abode with the unhappy sufferer, who heretofore was torn between them. But history records few instances, of national liberty secured by foreign arms. Help, counsel, mediation, aid, these may be without detriment, nay, with decisive benefit. But if it once amount to patronage or condescension, if it ever becomes questionable which are the allies, if the native shaft be bent from its vertically poised, self-centered resolution,—then is the struggle only between masters; for all is then dependant on the honour of another, and for one nation "to depend upon the honour " of another, is the definition of slavery."¹⁹

Sicily has seldom been long suffered to forget this bitter lesson. Her pathless plains, teeming

¹⁸ POLYBIUS, i. 5.

¹⁹ GRATTAN.

with exhaustless wealth, and yet inhabited by a pauperised, down-trodden, hope-sick population, attest its truth.²⁰ 'Tis a mournful sight to look out from her vine-clad hills upon the idle sea, that mutely seems to offer as of old, to bear the merchandise of her fairest daughter to all neighbouring lands, and bring her theirs in return. Sicily has none now to send; dares not to ask for any not her own.²¹ Her heart is quenched within her bosom. There's no such nationhood as the Sicilian now;²² it has been put to death—slow death—the death of centuries, but all the worse and surer therefore. The youth of Sicily passed away without ideas of her own,—and now in her old age she is dumb; she has no national recollections:—the saddest of sad things! But are there not monuments still standing on her plains? Yes, of the Normans,²³ and the Moors,²⁴

²⁰ If I seem to speak too warmly, it is because I have with mine own eyes seen the desolation of this people.

²¹ The only export trades of any value are in French or English hands,—excepting that of corn, which goes to pay the rents of non-resident proprietors.—MALTE BRUN, vol. vii. p. 729.

²² "A nation is a moral essence, not a geographical description."—BURKE.

²³ In the eleventh century a roving band of these marauders under the celebrated Roger Guiscard, conquered the island and established a feudal monarchy.—SISMONDI, vol. i. ch. 4.

²⁴ GOURBILLON: Travels in Sicily in 1819.—FORBIN'S Recollections of Sicily.

—of the Greeks, and the Phœnicians ; but every tradition unconsciously betrays the fatal truth, that they are not Sicilian. None of her conquerors appear to have sought to acclimatize their power. From age to age there was nought, for the natural energy and pride of the land to grow up round ; and as the fever of military proselytism²⁵ or ambition cooled in each invader, the island lay defenceless for a new aggressor. Thus history reads for us the riddle, why a country gifted with such physical advantages, lies still a blot upon the chart of human progress,—a hapless stricken mute in haughty Europe's household.

History being then the biography of a people, we expect from it such an unreserved and perfect confidence as to the domestic habits, thoughts, and feelings of a people, as will enable us not alone to judge closely and thoroughly of them, but as will make us feel as if we really knew them. A biographer who collects together all the public facts only of his hero, is no biographer at all. 'Tisn't what he did,—that's easily

²⁵ The name of religion has been unhappily profaned everywhere and by all creeds. Let us waste no more time in comparisons and recriminations, but rather examine our own hearts closely, whether no straggler from persecution's routed host, lurk still there.

come at, if much worth,—but how he did it,—when it came into his heart to do it,—what schooling of adversity or hardship trained him and tempered him, so that he was able to do it; that is what we want to know,—that is the spirit of the history of the man; and all the rest compared with that, is nothing. So is it with nations. 'Tis not merely the height of ambition's ladder, and the extent of the gaping crowd that stood by in wonder beholding; but did ambition find the ladder ready made for it, or did it make it for itself? And was the ladder planted on the honest earth, or by cunning fraud upon the shoulders of the multitude, that they should bear it? And if they bore it, why?—how long?—or duped and wheedled by what antics of their climbing burden? These are the things we crave specially to know; these are the things we are intensely interested in knowing.

What should we think of a history of Napoleon that began with his offer to relieve Toulon, although, confessedly, in that he first began visibly to figure as the Able-man of France? Much more interesting and to our purpose, is it to see if possible, what sort of boy he was at school, and whether in the intervals of mathematic les-

son-learning, he was not often seen apart "talking to himself."²⁶ The books he sat alone in the library to read, while his companions were at thoughtless play,—his mournfulness of temper as a young man in society,—surely it is these, and such things as these, that a biography of Napoleon ought to tell us all about. 'Tis not the general Napoleon, nor the consul Napoleon, nor the emperor Napoleon, nor the prisoner Napoleon we want to know, or indeed can know ; but the man Napoleon, who in Ajaccio came naked from his mother's womb—who naked must stand before the bar of an all-searching judge. 'Tis with the manhood of the man we must sympathise, or with nothing in him. Lieutenantcy in the line, generalship of division, diplomatic powers in Italy, popularity, command, royalty,—what are these ? The accidents that befel advocate Bonaparte's²⁷ third son, on his life-way from Corsica to St. Helena. Surely a faithful

²⁶ Madame de Bourrienne most naturally calls him "sulky," and to prove it, tells us, how when he went with a party to the play (of which he appears to have been fonder than most other relaxations,)—"he used often slip away from us without saying a word, and when we thought that he had left the theatre, some one would discover him in the second tier, sitting in a box by himself."—BOURRIENNE, vol. i. chap. 1.

²⁷ Idem.

historian then, should make us know him, who made this notable journey, in order that we should understand how such a pilgrimage ever came to be made.

'Tis so in all respects with nations. What they have produced, where they have dwelt, whither they roamed, and the time it took them to perform whatever they have done of good or ill, though chronicled with ever such particularity, is not the story of their life. "Laws themselves political constitutions, are not our life, but only the house where our life is led : nay, they are but the bare walls of the house, all whose essential furniture, the inventions and daily habits that regulate and support our existence, are the work, not of Dracos and Hampdens, but of the long forgotten train of prophets, philosophers, artists, and artisans, who from the first, have been jointly teaching us how to think and act, how to rule over physical and spiritual nature."²⁸

National history, I would say, therefore must be fully as much a social and domestic record, as a political and public one. And its highest ex-

²⁸ CARLYLE'S *Essays*, vol. ii. p. 382.

cellence and most exquisite charm consists, in these being as thoroughly blended in the picture as they are actually commingled in reality. Inextricably mingled are the socialities, ways of thought, beliefs (or unbeliefs) of every people with their outer diplomatic, constitutional, and economic acts and annals. If I were driven to choose, tell me what sort of tongue a people speak, what sort of worship they revere, what are their pastimes, their books, their edifices,—rather than their forms of rule, their financial means, their victories, trophies, or defeats. I really believe I could make a better guess at their character and condition thereby, than from the most minute political chronicle.

We are apt to forget how much of real politics there is, in what are not called politics at all. The word has been sold for a slave to party, and all its natural dignity has been worn down, in that basest and most exacting of servitudes. But the knowledge of the spirit that animates a nation, that elevates or distorts its every outward feature, that proves in the trial of time adequate to sustain it, or else, being corrupted and self-abandoned, inadequate to defend or save,—this must be gathered from the gossiping, the fami-

liar confidences, the unconscious proofs of health or of disease, from the silent heart-thoughts, hopes, faiths, and fears of the many, not from the authoritative lips of state trumpeters. "If a man were permitted to make all the ballads, he need not care who should make the laws of a nation ;"²⁹ so said one who had long and practical experience in public affairs, one, who, if there ever there was a true man, was true.

The vital question about every people is—*what* are they? Are they grave or frivolous? Are they industrious for the sake of independence, or mercenary for the sake of gain? Are they content with the things which nature has deemed sufficient for them, or restless to engross more than their share, and ambitious of the fame of being able to do so? Are they prodigal, irritable, vain; or thrifty, moderate, and calm? And then, how do these qualities develop themselves? What are their social institutions? What are their laws of property? What is the character of their literature and arts? Above all, have they faith? And if faith, then faith in what? Is it in the light of truth, or in the

²⁹ FLETCHER of Saltoun: Account of a conversation concerning the right regulation of governments, &c.—Works, p. 372.

gloom of error, or man's own worth and power to work out his salvation *without* fear or trembling ? All these have proved themselves in infinite variety, to be capable of inspiring men with truly sublime valour, energy, and self devotion ; into a comparison of them and of their intrinsic nature, I cannot be supposed to think of even glancing here ; but I do earnestly and anxiously wish to impress you with the conviction, that any of them is better than none at all ; that enthusiasm for something is essential to moral and national health ; that for the loss of it there is and can be no compensation ; and that therefore when you are reading history, it is of all things the most important for you to try and understand clearly, what each people did believe.

Look at the events which have, beyond all others, influenced the fate of modern society ; the spread of Mahometanism, for example.

The Arabs were individually as enterprising and brave before Mahomet's time, as since ; yet had they roved about their sandy realm from one generation to another—even from the days of Ishmael, not harbouring a thought of conquest beyond that of an Egyptian or a Persian caravan. There they lay drifting to and fro upon that

stony shore of civilization, a rope of sand, till the year 623,³⁰ when, behold,—sudden as the simoom—scathing and bright as the electricity of heaven,—a very ecstasy of faith enters this incoherent mass, and welds them into a uniform, gigantic power,—by no other power on earth save one resistible. “Extraordinary imposture !” say well-meaning people, looking back at the Mahometan irruption, now that it is long gone out, and that little remains, but its black cinders strewn over half the world. Ah no, friends, ’twas no stage-trick this volcano ; ’twas a real hell-hot opening of the common-place ground beneath men’s feet, and a fearful revelation of how far more than is ordinarily considered human,—human enthusiasm may go.

’Tis folly to imagine that Mahomet and his immediate followers were all of them a gang of spiritual swindlers, banded together for the sake of levying homage under false pretences. Just think, I pray you, what the thing was which some imagine to have been mere chicane, a real actual fire-vomiting volcano, open mouthed and

³⁰ The Hegira or Mahometan calendar, began on the 16th July, 623, the day of Mahomet’s flight from Mecca.

inappeasable for near a hundred years.³¹ What sort of mock fuel would keep this going, let me ask, during as many hours? Tinder and brimstone powder will make old women start and children clap their hands, when seen from due distance, on the stage; but what sort of affair does it look like when you stand close to the scene, or when it is enacted in the open day? 'Twas broad daylight when the Saracens broke in; 'twas in that broad daylight they played their wondrous part. But 'twas no recitation of unfelt thoughts, no sham threats or exhortations. Up—from the deepest deep of enthusiastic faith of Islam, the fury of that storm of proselytism rose; call it wrong, blind, erring, baleful,—but doubt not that it was thoroughly in earnest, for such it was assuredly.

And now tell me, ye sober, prudent, calculation worshippers, where has any change of half

³¹ It is not a little curious to find Napoleon, no inexperienced judge of human action,—ridiculing Voltaire's conception of Mahomet. "He has departed both from nature and history, in the character and conduct of his hero. He has committed a fundamental error by attributing to intrigue that which is solely the result of opinion. Those who have wrought great changes in the world, never succeeded by gaining over chiefs; but invariably by influencing the multitude. The former is the resource of cunning, and produces only secondary results; the latter is the resource of genius, and changes the face of the world." — *LAS CASES*, part iii. p. 80.

the efficacy been wrought in human fate, by your expedients as by this Mahometanism? Remember by how great a number of mankind its image and superscription is still borne. Is this all thievery and a hoax? Surely we cannot afford to entertain that supposition; neither indeed does experience show, that when the violence of its sanguinary propagandism had subsided, it was capable of doing no good service in its own dark way to man. It trod out the foul embers of polytheism in many lands wherein Christianity had either not yet taken root, or through the suicidal hand of sectarianism had perished. It carried everywhere it went the grandest of all conceptions and beliefs,—that of the essential unity of a governing and judging God. Was it not better to have this imprinted on men's hearts, than the animal devilry of heathenism?

In literature and science, too, it had great and worthy things to say. Astronomy and chemistry found, in the Caliphs of the seventh century, warm and munificent friends, when in barbarized christendom they scarce had where to lay their head.³² And in Spain, let it never be forgotten,

³² Edinb. Encycl. Art. Astronomy.—Art. Chemistry.

that learning of every kind was in like manner fostered,³³ and some of the earliest foundations of the university system laid,³⁴—can you seriously believe,—by *deliberate impostors*?

It seems difficult to conceive a more attractive and instructive subject of inquiry than this,—what sort of people were these Saracens upon whom this spirit of Islamism fell? What were they before their hero's time, that fitted them specially for the work he set them to do; and how was their character moulded and shapen by the influence of his doctrines? Do you not feel that you want the story of that life,—that you instinctively demand circumstantial evidence to sustain the almost incredible recital of their deeds; that you must get domesticated in their previous habits of thought and action, before you can realize to your own minds, the facts alleged regarding them? Men say 'tis easy to be persuaded; 'tis hard to doubt what all the world ad-

³³ "When Abdulrahman, after subduing the south of Spain, had established in Cordova the seat of his dominion, (A.D. 759,) the sciences, which were everywhere else abandoned, took up their residence in this city."—TOWNSEND'S Spain, vol. ii. p. 66.—See DUNHAM'S History of Spain, vols. i. and ii.

³⁴ The University of Cordova, founded A. D. 968, was among the first institutions of the kind established in Europe.—BOYLE'S Chronology, vol. ii. p. 1409.

mits as true :—there can be no greater fallacy. We give in our adhesion to the general opinion that we find prevalent, because it would be very inconvenient to dispute it, without research for argumentative weapons, and because we have not time or industry to seek them. But don't flatter yourselves that you practically know the course of any great series of events, about which you have never taken such pains. You don't know one word of it; you cannot; the thing is morally impossible. You have heard some one say it is all written in this or the other book, which you have never read; you don't know of any reason why your informant should tell lies, or the author of the book write lies upon the subject; and so you take for granted that what they say is true. But is this—"to know?" Is this that exercise of your sympathy and judgment, your passions and your understanding, which forms the whole practical use of history? As mere dogmas never did, and never can subdue or purify the human heart,—as example has from the beginning of time, been in social and political and religious systems, the one and universal means of practically governing the minds of men,—as in the Divine revelation we revere, every precept and

expostulation points, with unanswerable force and power, to the Great Example "that we should follow his steps,"—so, if we would profit by the study of history, we must get hold of it in its humanity, not its cold abstraction; we must grasp its rough hand, hear its unequal voice, sit by its troubled sleep, join in its wayward course,—hope and fear, tremble and exult with all its ebb and flow of fortune,—to have any true or genuine insight therein. Must there not be for this, the story of a life?

We come now to consider what *is not* history.

Suppose you asked for the biography of some illustrious warrior, and you were presented with a handsome volume or two, containing an accurate list of all the persons he robbed (according to the laws of war)—the dates of his devastations—the christian and surnames of all the people of quality he put to death, and a careful average of the horses and common soldiers slain for his glory;—suppose there were added thereto, an inventory of his military wardrobe, and of the castle wherein his booty was stored;—and suppose you were duly informed of the weight of his sword, and where it was made,—whether in Damascus or Toledo,—the days of his birth, mar-

riage, and death,—the cost of his coffin and width of his tomb,—would you take this as a story of the life of your hero? Would these enable you to know the man?

We have what is called a “life of Clive,” by Malcolm.³⁵ It is an elaborate defence and glorification of him, and contains much that it is well to know. Others have written of him; some in a strain of unmingled malediction;³⁶ some in a tone of political apology.³⁷ Still we have no life of Clive. The eulogy and invective are equally blind; neither speak as if they knew the man. We hear of his dark, and of his dazzling deeds; but we see him not,—he is not there. Every particular of “the Red treaty,” has been put on record;³⁸ but where is its fabricator, or any pic-

³⁵ Life of Lord Clive; by the late Sir John MALCOLM: 2 vols.

³⁶ MILL's Hist. of the British power in India; book iv.

³⁷ See BURKE's allusions to Clive, in the celebrated speech against Warren Hastings; Works, vol. vii., 4to. Ed.—and Chatham's panegyric, in which he declared the victor of Plassey to be a “heaven-born general:”—Speeches, vol. iii.

³⁸ The revolution whereby the native sovereignty of Bengal was subverted, and the dominion of England established in its room, was prepared by the treachery of Omichund a Hindoo banker, to whom Clive and his associates bound themselves by written treaty. When Suraja Dowlah had fallen, Omichund demanded his share of the spoil; and he was then publicly told that the treaty he relied on was a forgery, and that he was to get nothing. Two treaties similar in terms had been prepared, one on white paper, the other on red. Admiral Watson's name was forged by Clive to that on which Omichund relied,

ture of him, that we can believe resembles the original? The "diamond-hilted sword" may still be seen;³⁹ but where is the hard hand that grasped it?

Nor cheat yourselves with the poor conceit, that, from the counterpoise of opposite misrepresentations, you may gather out the truth. Can varied blindness teach you how to see? The controversy between Clive's haters and admirers may be one day settled, and then perhaps the world will know for certain, the exact sum of his gains and crimes. But how much nearer shall we then be to the man? Public sins and acquisitions are not the staple of any human being's history,—not even of Clive's. Yet, into one or other of these shallow scales, everything seems thrown. Some talk of him as an incarnate fiend. Alas! I fear he was but a man of the same frailties and passions as ourselves, lured into perdition's stream by such temptation, as no other man hath had since Cortez' time. Think does it beseem us to walk proudly on that untried cur-

while from the other all mention of his contract was omitted. The wretched man is said to have gone forth from the presence of his deceiver, in a state of idiocy. MILL: iv. 3.

³⁹ Presented to him by the East India Company, upon the taking of Arcot.—MALCOLM, vol. i.

rent's bank, or hoot the drowning as they are swept by?

Unhappy Clive!—The verdict of his school-master seems to have been ominously just :—"he is a most unlucky boy."⁴⁰ Luckless, indeed,—notwithstanding all his wondrous—almost incredible successes;⁴¹ and apparently an unhappy man, if we can venture to infer anything, one way or the other, concerning him. Credit Malcolm, and he was a very demigod;⁴² and doubtless, if the political results and consequences of his life were all, 'twere difficult to believe him to have had no higher nature than his tools and dupes. But here lies the evil of not having the true story of his life; wanting it, sympathy with the good and evil, that in specifically intense degree, coexisted in his wandering heart,—is impossible; and wanting that, all is wanting.

What? Sympathy with a ruthless plunderer and state robber? What have we to do with him? Even towards such a man, were he really

⁴⁰ MALCOLM: vol. i. chap. 1.

⁴¹ CAMBRIDGE: War in India.

⁴² "It was his fate to suffer not for his vices but his virtues. His upright and honourable discharge of his duties, was at the root of all the persecutions he endured."—MALCOLM, iii. 18. "Our government gave grace to conquest; and men were *satisfied to be at the feet of generous and humane conquerors!*"—Id. ii. 16.

before you, there would be duties to perform,—justice and pity. Even from his life, were it adequately storied, you would have much to learn,—humbleness and charity. Justice and pity? These, surely, were his due; nay, does it not come over us, like an oppressive sense of fate, to think that now these meagrest, last of human rights, are, by the very fact that his life's story is untold, denied him. Let me not be mistaken. If there is a crime, which more than any other I abhor, 'tis that of wanton wrong, done by an enlightened, powerful, and so-called christian race, to a less favoured, weak, and unoffending people. If there be a duty plain to my conscience,—a right hallowed in my memory by all that is glorious and good in history,—it is that of resistance to such wrong by every energy of life, and, if need be, even unto death. Heaven knows, I hate such deeds as Clive's, sufficiently; and I should mourn to think that any word of mine should make you loathe them less. Still, were I Clive's biographer, I would try to do him justice; still, if you had his biography, your better nature would, I am persuaded, do him justice too. I would not intercept your pity; you would not withhold it. Guilty and blood-stained even

though he were, that right he had not forfeited,—that duty you could not devolve. The darker his too famous actions seemed to you, the greater would your obligation be to bridle your resentment—and to exercise your justice. If ye be just unto innocence alone, what thank have ye? If ye be merciful to mitigated evil only, where is your reward? 'Tis he who hath sinned much, that needs much justice; 'twas for such as he, the love of justice came into the world. Without it, the world had long ago turned into one blind weltering savagery. As it is, what do we chiefly mean by civilization, but those habitual amenities that spring from mercy and from justice? Or wherein does Christian civilization most notably transcend all others, save in its more than mortal pity, sympathy, and equity?

Have I then anything to say for Clive? Only this word,—which has, in truth, more regard to our own hearts, than to him,—he was a fellow man. A fellow man—although of star-like genius, and almost miraculous fortune;—though oftener reproached with violence and fraud, than his associates, because being of more daring spirit, he was foremost to attempt, and frankest to avow, the guilt whose profits they partook

with him;⁴³—a fellow man,—thrown upon opportunities which at his touch turned golden, while, in the hands of every other man, they were as very lead;⁴⁴—who, being a clerk in a Madras store, could not rest till he had bowed the throne of Tamerlane, and taught the princes of the East to tremble at the whisper of his name;⁴⁵ and yet who having piled up riches for himself,⁴⁶ and carved out a new empire for his countrymen⁴⁷—having bearded a whole parliament of foes,⁴⁸ and

⁴³ Thus Admiral Watson shrunk from being a party to the Red Treaty; but when all was over, he demanded his share of the plunder, and his companions could not afford to send home an empty-handed witness of their illustrious deeds.—“*Is habitus animorum est, ut pessimum facinus auderent pauci, plures vellent, omnes paterentur.*”—TACITUS.

⁴⁴ MILL: iv. 2, 3.

⁴⁵ MALCOLM: i. 7.

⁴⁶ He appears to have received in actual money nearly £200,000, besides a jaghire or estate worth £27,000 a year. Idem. vol. i. 8.

⁴⁷ MILL: iv. 3.

⁴⁸ When first the real nature of the transactions became known, a burst of honest shame arose; and the House of Commons voted that “in the acquisition of his wealth Lord Clive had abused the powers with which he was entrusted.” But when the value of his conquests to the nation at large were reconsidered, the indignation of parliament subsided rapidly; and after a short interval, the same House of Commons which had denounced Clive, resolved—“that he had rendered great and meritorious services to this country.”—Parl. Hist. vol. 54. Throughout the whole discussion Clive maintained a tone almost of defiance. He spoke in every debate, with great ability, and “laid about him on all sides,” taunting the ministry, reproaching the opposition, and recommending the House to stick his head on the Jacobite’s pole at Temple-bar, with those of the chairmen of the East India Company for heraldic supporters.—MALCOLM, iii. 18.

received the highest honours from his king,⁴⁹—found life a load too heavy to be borne, and fled its burthen in an agony of despair!⁵⁰

Which of you will stand up here and take the hazard of his end, upon the arrogant condition that, called to walk upon his stormy path, you would have trod its way all-faithfully? Ah, friends, history often quotes the sacred warning,—“be not haughty-minded, but fear!” Your temptations, which by comparison are trifling, are forgotten; your distractions seldom swamp you; you inhale an atmosphere of national and social sympathy; your first footsteps in aberration are beset with friendly admonition, and the very espionage of scandal-loving observation works for your good. You know not what it is to be flung out, in the corruptible heat of youth,⁵¹ upon a distant foreign strand, amid a dastard gang of money-changers;⁵²—to live in their den of jew diplomacy, till every sense of honour, love, humanity, and right, be stifled in you;—to feel up-

⁴⁹ He was raised to the Irish peerage in 1761, and received the order of the Bath, then a token of distinction, in 1764. In 1772, he was made Lord Lieutenant of Montgomeryshire.

⁵⁰ 22nd Nov. 1774, in the forty-ninth year of his age.

⁵¹ Clive was only eighteen when first sent out to India.

⁵² See MILL's account of them; iv. 2.

rising in scornful mutiny, against this "rotten-hearted"⁵³ system, an instinct of stupendous power within your lonely breast, and at each onward step to be compelled to feel more vividly, the perilous irresponsibility of genius;—to find the gate of empire left ajar by venal sentinels, and its uncounted treasures placed within your grasp:⁵⁴—say, is it worthy, noble, wise,—to talk lightly or uncharitably of the force of these temptations,—or, that the man on whom their combined influence fell, forcing him for a season on the world's gaze, then, flinging him off life's parapet, down into darkness,—were not a fitting object of your pity? Such were your duty to yourselves and him, had you the story of his life; but in its absence, there is no real object toward which your justice or compassion can be shown. Moral feelings ought not to follow shadows, even when cast by seemingly gigantic forms; but if you refuse to acknowledge a cold public outline as the warm life's blood of a man, why accept any such like thing as the story of the life of a nation?

⁵³ Clive's own contemptuous description of his official colleagues, in a private letter.—MALCOLM, i. 6.

⁵⁴ MILL, *ut supra*.

Events, though strung together with nicest precision and without number, cannot form history. Call them the bones and joints of history, if you will. But is a skeleton a man? Can it move you with any other feeling than disgust? What can it do but moulder away? The sinews that once clothed it with energy are gone; the temporary arch of beauty, whereof it was the inner prop and stay, has crumbled down, and of its primal symmetry, this grim scaffolding can furnish you not even with the outline. These cold dry bones,—fit them together with what anatomic care you will,—frame them and glaze them scientifically as you please;—but can affection's fondest eye distinguish one skeleton from another?

Lists of events are historic skeletons; you cannot recognise them, though you stared at them for ever: and they have no voice to give an account of themselves. Of what good are these to you? You want a friend who can speak to you, as ye walk together by the shores of the unfathomed past. You want to hear his sighs for irreparable ill, to watch his quivering lip as he recounts with pride, the fortitude and self-denial he would immortalize. You want to listen

to his joyous laugh, and trace the furrow of his tears;—you want to be upon such terms with him as to know the cause of both,—wherefore his exultation and his sorrow. Such a friend is history; but that dumb, pulseless, motionless, irrecognizable collection of dry facts and dates, which sometimes are denominated such,—is not history.

Something to sympathise with,—something to love,—something whose spirit is in common with our better nature,—something that can make us less of dross and more of metal, less absorbed in the trivialities of time, and more awake to the recollections of eternity,—this is the want which it is the object of true history to supply, and whatsoever fails to accomplish this, is not history.

In the university of Strasburgh there flourished in his day, a worthy man, who in the progress of somewhat about thirty years of an industriously spent life, collected, classified, ticketed, and labelled several hundreds of thousands of facts;⁵⁵ and having at length settled and arranged them

⁵⁵ The Revolutions of Europe, &c. from the subversion of the Roman empire in the West to the abdication of Napoleon; translated by A. Crichton: Stereotype edition—price six shillings.

to his mind, he made a present of his fact museum to the world. And truly grateful a fact-loving world should be, to this most hard-working sapper and miner, quarryman and fact-cutter, for his indefatigable pains in rendering available for use so vast a collection. Grateful we would fain be, if possible. But oh, Christopher Koch, why call this gathering of thine—a history?⁵⁶

A museum is good and useful in its way, containing much knowledge, and leading to further acquisition. And all its virtues are in proportion to its minute extent. The number of items is the measure of its wealth; for each item is a fact, or the key rather to a fact, simple or complex as it may be. And a ticket upon each to tell its value, and where it came from, is a vast advantage in such a gathering: a list, moreover, duly classified and chaptered, to suit the chambers wherein each set of facts is laid by, is a shrewd and praiseworthy device. 'Tis all right, and a thing to be desired to make one wise. But what is the thing? Is it not necessarily a mere dead collecting together of dead ma-

⁵⁶ Although the appellation is not assumed in the title page, the preface and introduction leave no room to doubt the learned author's estimation of the class to which his work belonged.

terials, whose only unity consists in the accident of their neighbourhood, but which are as essentially devoid of all innate power or vitality, as the nails in a carpenter's box? Very excellent things these nails, when used by a competent workman ; capable, according to their respective sizes, of holding fast or holding up, what without them would be sadly unmanageable. But a bookful of facts is nothing more than the roomful of ticketed minerals, or the boxful of carpenter's nails. It may in some respect resemble these ; but assuredly it doth in no respect resemble history.

For history is a living, thinking, creative thing,—a being even as man of whom it speaks ; like him assuming a thousand accidental forms of outward pressure, but within, a spirit dwelling mystically there, communing with us when we seek it, speaking to us when we will hear it, gifted with a voice full of comfort and truth, but full also of the monitory cadences that rung in Darius' banqueting-halls, telling of unhallowed empire that shall pass away.

Factology is not history ; although it is a useful branch of industry in its way, just as the stocking and filling of a colour-shop, and the ar-

rangement of oils and brushes, is a very proper way of making money, not to be sneered at by any man. But a colour-man is not an artist,—probably has as little of the artist about him, as any one that could be named. And neither is your factologist an artist of either high or low degree. Accident or whim may lead him to collect or mix his own materials, but this is not art. The work of art is to use the materials gathered by other hands, and out of these, dead and insensible as they are, to make symbols of ideal truth. Its business is with spirit more than matter, or by means of matter, to make spirit speak with spirit, according to the untaught and unteachable gift which it possesses.

A so-called history, which is not the biography of a people, or a portion thereof, is nothing but a dead nomenclature of dead particulars, whereof no life can come. A biographical dictionary is a clumsy contrivance for abbreviating truth; a dull attempt at condensing what in the process dies, loses its inherent qualities of spirit, and remains a dead result, with no vital character in common with its former self. But if it be hard to tamper with the biography of individuals without destroying it, how

much more difficult—or rather more manifestly impossible is it—to do so with the biography of nations. Small type, close printing, marginal notes—no, friend,—all wont do : you'll never get to heaven by tower of Babel building. Give up such foolery at once ; 'twill only end in weary, dim confusion ; and every flight or story that you add, will but add to the enormity of your error, for the realm of spirit is not within reach of any heap of bricks that you can put together.

As for General Histories—Histories of Europe—Compendious Abstracts, &c. I hold all such in utter abomination.⁵⁷ If you want a chronology, have it by all means ; if you think it better in a map or tableau, why hang up your information over the fireplace, and welcome ; it can at least do no great harm there ;—or if you fancy the index form is better, and that for reference, you desire to have upon your shelves a dictionary of dates, and names,—numbers of killed and starved,—victims of plague or fire,—length of forced

⁵⁷ “ As for the corruptions and moths of history, which are epitomes, the use of them deserveth to be banished, as all men of sound judgment have confessed, as those that have fretted and corroded the sound bodies of many excellent histories, and wrought them into base and unprofitable dregs.”—BACON.

marches,—value of plunder taken,—progeny of royal beds,—memoranda of kings' jewels, concubines, and tombstones,—and all that these cost their loyal subjects annually,—buy your wholesale almanac by all means, and bind it well, and read as much of it as you can,—only call it not history; for be assured that it neither is, nor is like in any respect that great and truly honourable thing, whose name you would thus irreverently take in vain.

Still the encyclopedic notion haunts the minds of men; if they could only live long enough, work hard enough, render their details minute enough,—then would they not triumph, and the world confess, that after all, it had no such treasure as a universal historical compendium? Alas! no; the longer and in its way the more complete such a production, the farther does it stray from its highest purpose. Deep, many-sided, sharp-cornered impressions are those only which are lasting; and these are the indentations on the too malleable memory, which are alone of real worth. Drive quickly over these sands, leave a neat, even, patent, wheel-rim track therein, and how much of it will tomorrow find remaining? Faultless style, exact proportion given to each topic, strict im-

partiality, unobjectionable condensation of all that can be known, nothing of *leading* importance left out, and every thing of *prominent* interest kept in,⁵⁸—and surely we might have an excellent general history of India, “from the earliest period to the present time.” You might have your twenty volumes I admit, and if ever they should be so much used as to require binding, I don’t mean to deny that the gilt letters on the back would assert, that there was within a perfect definition of Hindustan, from the days of Shem, till now; but tell me, what sort of practical remembrance of the dissimilar races, institutions, worships, arts, existences,—that have in turn occupied that golden land, could you have therefrom? Even were it possible, which in a mind of healthy action it never can be, to recollect these successive troops of definitions, you would still have learned little or nothing of history. ’Tis a dire mistake to confound pictures with definitions,—the fruit of art with the tools

⁵⁸ “The student must avoid those so-called universal histories, which teach nothing. These are compendiums, from which every thing important is effaced. Let even the reader who does not mean to addict himself to history as his peculiar department, recur as much as possible to original sources, and particular histories, which will afford him far more instruction.”—SCHELLING: *Fragments of German prose writers*; p. 120.

of logic. No definition of a man will ever give you such a recognition of him as his picture ; and no series of definitions, however elaborate or numerous, will form a historic panorama.

The child hears of the cedar upon far Lebanon, and asks of what sort is the tree. Will you tell the child how many feet 'tis high, what is its girth round, that its principal boughs often number three score, that on each bough are a thousand leaves, that there are many disputes regarding its age, but that its colour, specific qualities, and rate of reproduction are better ascertained : would you baulk your child's curiosity with this inferential farrago, while at hand there hung a living portraiture of the princely tree,—a picture capable of painting on the young susceptible imagination, an actual image of its sable majesty ? And are we not all children in our ignorance, whom, if history would lead and guide, it must fascinate, charm, poetically impress, fill with images that will dwell without effort in the memory, and rise unbidden and unsought for ? With these feelings you will not be surprised to hear me say, that I value histories very often in proportion to the brevity of the period they profess to account for. The best annalists both

of ancient times and our of own, were deeply conscious of the necessity of fixing their own attention and that of their readers, upon what wholesale history-jobbers would call a very limited period. Ah! they knew what was to be done, and the infinite difficulty of doing it thoroughly. Thucydides thought the chronicle of a particular war quite as much as he could accomplish; and Sallust's only works are miniatures;—but such miniatures! Look at Clarendon,—how inexpressibly more valuable is his narrative of a few years, than any work on general English history could possibly have been. The finest productions of our own time also, may almost without exception be adduced in confirmation of this view.⁵⁷

Finally,—the essential difference between history and its counterfeit consists in this, that it regards those conspicuous events which its poor imitator is exclusively concerned with, as no more than so many mile-stones set up along time's highway,—useful to tell us how far we have come, but neither the way itself, nor any index or guide to that knowledge, for the sake of

⁵⁷ See Lec. III.

which we are wending our course thereon. It is intensely conscious how much of what is really worth forming an intimate acquaintance with,—the proofs of genius and goodness that lie along that way,—is to be seen and judged of best, by what may almost look like getting off the public road. Yet there is a sublime and poetic keeping in this also. As these things came not by observation, ushered in by noisy preludings, or upon “eventful mornings, ever to be kept in anniversary,” and noted in the calendar with asterisks,—so now their memory walks in beauty, in the quiet and uncrowded shade, remote from the brawling processions of state, the equipage of royalty, or tramp of men at arms.

The poetry of Greece—at which milestone will you pull up for that? Yet what were history if it passed it by? The free heart and self-dependance of North American citizenship? At what cross-roads will you stop to ask, where was it sown? Yet history would scarce forget to ask for it. But history is an old traveller who knows the country, and in whose company you often leave the worn path without losing your way.

And in truth it is the evils for the most part,

that come publicly to pass ; they are sudden and seen of all men. Great benefits imperceptibly descend, like the unseen dew, to soften and fertilize the parched and withered places of this world. Greatness?—Its coronation and its fall are in the market place ; but did it ever grow there ? That, and all its real life of goodness, was silent, gradual, at home.

But there is, if possible, a weightier reason why you cannot rest content with mere event-catalogues instead of history ; and that is, that from them you can learn nothing of the people, through whose realm you are journeying. You can't put up at a milestone ;—there is no tarrying there. If you want information, or if you crave rest and refreshment,—leave the highway, and get you to the peasant's homestead, to the cottage of the hard toiling man ; he never yet refused the cup of milk to the thirsty stranger ; and, trust me, brother, that cup of milk so asked and given, and the free genial talk with him who gives it to you, is better than the costliest goblet that was ever drained amid a shouting multitude, in commemoration of some blood-stained victory. In this cup of milk there is more real history.

During the eleventh century, you have been told at school, that England was conquered by the Normans; and for convenience sake, lawyers, almanac-makers, and other cutlers of the dry bones of antiquity, are accustomed to begin their reckonings of British history, for the most part, from "the conquest." The what?—"The conquest, to be sure;"—and they reiterate the phrase with all the amusing confidence of a sleeping man, who answers some incoherent question, in his dreams. Not a suspicion crosses their minds, that they are gabbling pertly about a most complicated and still imperfectly appreciable event—or rather chain of events,—extending over many years. I fear indeed that, to the majority of us, that Norman conquest is still a sealed book. Pray do not flatter your indolence with the delusion, that you may find enough upon the subject in the first chapters of Hume's pleasant tale. Very little, apparently, did that prince of sophists know about the matter. The landings on the coast, general engagements, capitulations, city burnings, curfew edicts, and the like, are, I believe, set down by him in their right order, and opposite their true dates. Hume had no motive for transposing or omitting these, and

therefore we may give him the benefit of veracity so far. But neither had he any pecuniary or philosophic motive, for taking the pains to investigate, much less to write a history of the conquest. And, accordingly, in place of a calm and often-pausing walk through the Anglo-Saxon garden of the eleventh century, before its integrity was broken in upon,—instead of a clear mapping of its undulations, terraces, and glades, every inch whereof was valiantly though vainly fought for,—instead of a record of the worth and opulence and art, that, not in one contemptuous breath, but by an infinite succession of outrages and cruelties was gradually destroyed,—you have a prancing troop of mailed riders galloping from Exeter to Durham, over one miserable heap of helpless ruins.

If you are worthy of the name of Irishmen, you must not linger in the infamous delusion, that such clumsy fables in any sort resemble England's conquest by the Normans. These Normans, when the Saxon race no longer could resist them, roved hither also. Strongbow and Fitz Stephens in all respects played on this side of the sea, the part which Osbert and Taillebois performed on the other. For centuries had

these Northmen been assailing ineffectually both islands; not till the eleventh century did they make their footing good in either; thenceforth they became firmly established in both kingdoms; and now, from the fair queen who occupies the throne, down to the humblest gentleman who owes her fealty, there are few perhaps within whose veins, Norman blood does not flow.

Fortunately for England, she has never been wholly without some light, whereby to read this most memorable portion of her annals. But it is curious that it should have been reserved for the genius of a Frenchman, to render the first worthy account of her subjugation to the Norman yoke. No born Englishman, however, could have executed his work in a more thoroughly national spirit, than Augustin Thierry. It is in almost every point of view, one of the noblest historical productions of our own, or any other age. It is one of those rare works, in which the palpitating form of national resistance and defeat is adequately portrayed. The sufferings of the vanquished are not given in general sentimentalisms; but the quivering lip, the famine stricken look, the hiding in the churches, the mutilated form, dishonoured womanhood, and houseless

age, and emigrant valour,—all, all are there,—there to be read with finer organs than the outer eyes, and hard to be forgotten.

The whole tendency of historic writing during the eighteenth century was towards generalism. Comprehensiveness was deemed the highest merit, and to this, reality and truth were sacrificed. It was general surveying, not painting; it was compilation, not creation; it was a working trade, not art. It affected to be philosophical; but its result was to give an utterly false notion of general uniformity and likeness, between two great sets of nations—the civilized and the savage. Men wrote up their theory in a historic form. Gibbon's aim against Christianity is obvious throughout; Hume wanted to make a case in favour of absolutism; and Robertson was influenced by a bitter anti-catholic feeling, in every line he wrote. Foreign writers are open to the same observation. Raynal, Voltaire,⁵⁸ and Rollin, though always eloquent and often useful, are like their English cotemporaries, invariably su-

⁵⁸ In the intervals of leisure from his varied avocations of politician, critic, play-wright, novelist, and extinguisher of the Christian religion,—this smartest of men could not dash off more than six or seven volumes of history.

perficial, and unworthy of implicit credence. They were demagogues, not statesmen. They all wrote for a purpose, beside the mere narrative itself. A darling thought with all of them, was to make clean work of their entire subject,—to go through the whole of it, beginning at the beginning, and ending at the end. Nothing would satisfy Raynal but a complete view of the conquests of all the Indies, eastern and western, stowed into a single work ;⁵⁹ and all about all the nations of antiquity, seemed a very manageable matter to Rollin.⁶⁰ 'Twas the hey-day of conceit both literary and moral. Man had got off his swaddling clothes, and could outrun all ancient limits : and a precious run verily they made of it. Printing and paper had so multiplied knowledge—(they took multiplied ignorance for increased information)—that if a man could only read fast, and write quick, there was

⁵⁹ Philosophical and Political History of the Settlements and Trade of the Europeans to the East and West Indies : by the Abbè Raynal ; published originally in eight fact-ful and yet extremely pleasant volumes. What might not this man have done, had he contented himself with chronicling the exploits of any one of these imperial pirates, or the fate of even one captive isle !

⁶⁰ The Ancient History of the Egyptians, Carthaginians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Medes, Persians, Greeks, and Macedonians ; by M. Rollin : —ten volumes.

in fact no saying what might not be done. The old masters had spent a life at a single temple,—gathering materials from all ends of the earth, looking for new ones where none had dreamt they lay, then slowly and with delicate care composing them, so that every irrequisite atom might be chiselled off, and every moulding of a frieze or cornice might tell its portion of the noble tale. But this was mere fiddling in the eyes of our last century men ; they could build a street,—or a whole town, if they chose, in less time than others took to rear their single edifices. And they did choose ; and they did “run up”—(as the builders aptly phrase it)—street after street, and town after town ; and very nice lath and plaster accommodation there may still be had in them, for those who have no better.

Happily for us, however, we are beginning to have better. A great and fundamental change has taken place in opinion, respecting art of every kind, and historic art especially. Men have come back to the old classic notions, which had been dislocated by the flippancy and vanity of a particular epoch. Industry and research are no more neglected or contemned. Men have dug up the long-buried truth “that it is foolish to

“ imagine the earnest study of means, cripples
 “ the genius; that it is only from a mastery of
 “ them, that free creative power can emanate;
 “ and that it is only when familiar with all the
 “ paths already trodden, and when moving with
 “ ease in them, the mind discovers new ones.”⁶¹

To do even a small thing well, seems once more, what it used to seem, an immensely difficult performance. Barante takes many years to paint the brief dynasty of Valois;⁶² and Bancroft has, fortunately for his own fame, and the world's benefit, seen many a summer come and go, and his glorious work unfinished.⁶³

The science of Historical Antiquities, so long neglected, has during the last sixty years, en-

⁶¹ C. M. VON WEBER, :—Letter from the artist to his pupil.—Mrs. AUSTEN's Fragments from German writers, p. 55.

⁶² History of the Dukes of Burgundy of the House of Valois; from A.D. 1364 to 1477: in thirteen volumes.

⁶³ History of the United States; by George Bancroft.—“The work
 “ will necessarily extend to several volumes. I aim at being concise;
 “ but also at giving a full picture of American institutions. The first
 “ volume is now published separately and for a double motive. The
 “ work has already occasioned long preparation, and its completion will
 “ require further years of exertion; I have been unwilling to travel so
 “ long a journey alone, and desire, as I proceed, to correct my own
 “ judgment by the criticisms of candour. I have thought that the
 “ public would recognise the sincerity of my inquiries, and that I should
 “ make for myself friends disposed to assist in placing within my reach
 “ the information essential to success.”—Preface to the first edition:
 1834. A second and third volume have since been published.

gaged, the noblest powers of German,⁶⁴ French,⁶⁵ and English⁶⁶ intellect. History owes to archæology an eternal debt of gratitude. It has proved itself the vital earth, by whose touch the vigour of the spent Titan may for ever be renewed. Far from warring with the poetry of history, it has restored to us a thousand images of each country's childhood, which neglect and sarcasm had thrown by ; it is daily clothing the mythic wands of Egypt, Greece, Rome, India, Araby, and the Celtic nations, with the green verdure of their ancient prime ; it has vowed to cease not, till the ice of sceptic ignorance be hewn through, and the gush of antiquity's gay bounding stream be seen and heard of all men.

I cannot help looking on this devout and enthusiastic spirit of historical discovery as one of the best signs of our time. It opens its broad heart to all kinds of knowledge. Architectural fragments, rusted medals, half-obliterated inscrip-

⁶⁴ Besides Niebuhr, Boeckh, Otfried Müller, and F. Schlegel, there are Grimm, Titmann, Wachsmuth, Heeren, Gatterer, Buttmann, Zoega, and Humboldt, Winkelmann, and Bötticher.

⁶⁵ Champollion, Raoul-Rochette, Denon, De Sacy, Quatremere, Latronn, Iomard, Fauriel, Lajard, Depping, Gosselin, Hammer, Michelct, Larue, Michel, Theiner, &c.

⁶⁶ Clinton, Young, Rennell, Sir W. Jones, Hayman Wilson, Briggs, Wilford, Carey, Colcbrooke.

tions, allegoric signs and pictures, sculptural relics, ornaments and arms, household and agricultural utensils—it has given them all a tongue ; it calls them all as its witnesses ; and history, listening to their broken talk, grows eloquent, poetical, and vivid once again.

It is strange and mystical how all paths of truth converge, and often as we travel onward,—here and there the broken track of an old way, looks up from our feet and seems to ask—child of my old friend—art thou come the way thy buried father trod ? Portici hath grown up in the same crevice of the sheltered bay, poor Herculeum occupied. Why ? It came there all unconscious of a predecessor, only using its clear eye to see that this nook was a beauteous one, though at the foot of the fire-god's altar. There sat Portici down, not as on a father's grave to sport, but because 'tis natural to choose out pleasant places where to dwell, and this was one. Not till long after years, did excavation tell the marvelling child,—thy home is built above thy parent's tomb.

And now, archæology delves for those traditions which point out where a former life did lie. Tradition is the cenotaph of truth ; barbarous,

if that whose epitaph it retains were rude ; noble if the name it bears was so. Aye—this tradition is a grand, right noble, sacred heirloom of mankind. They deeply err who slight or would efface it. They say it is so corruptible : yes, it is human ; but is it not like man, immortal too ? It has outlived literature, outstood the storms of time and wrecks of empire,—’tis after all the only book that no fire ever wholly burned. I cannot say half what I feel towards tradition,—history’s tearful, but still faithful, watchful mother !

It is exquisitely touching to find Niebuhr, the great historic antiquarian, doing homage to the worth and beauty of tradition. “Not only in “the divine Tyrol, but on moor or heath, I could “live happy, and feel no want of the arts, among “a people who had a history.”⁶⁷ It is to a great extent, in quest of lost traditions, and of those social and religious customs which are of traditional observance, that archæology has of recent years undertaken its most toilsome search. Centuries of neglect and note-less oblivion have thrown unexampled difficulties in its way ; and

⁶⁷ Lebensnachrichten :—Fragments of German Writers, p. 189

the unsifted cinder-heaps of time are not only grown so many, but so mingled, that a man has need of no common spirit to sustain him in the wearisome and, for the most part, wholly inappreciable labour of research among them. Many a day and night must be consumed in unshared, solitary drudgery, ere it becomes plain even to himself, that sufficient materials exist for the restoration of some lost edifice. At length he ventures to shape out the ground plan of his conjecture, and to define its limits. Slowly the angles meet, and the work of re-construction gradually ascends. Then some broad-shouldered fact,—which hitherto lay hidden, lifts its incongruous head and asks,—what is to be done with me? A trying question to the long-toiling architect of some half completed theory. Will he reject the invading truth, that threatens unceremoniously to dislocate all his stabilities? Or, compromising the matter, will he offer to make room in a corner for the intruder? Assuredly it requires no ordinary qualities of mind to forego the work of years, and own that the conception, whatever it be, which lonely and unrequited toil had contributed to endear, must be flung by as an illusion no more to be named, or thought of. The

trial of historic virtue is still greater, if the subversive discovery comes not till after the erroneous hypothesis has been given to the world and has won its meed of praise. Nothing—nothing but the enthusiastic love of truth, which is able to absorb every other love, and to silence every temporal temptation, can save a man from this most perilous snare. But it has proved effectual; and it will again, whenever men sit down to study history for its own sake, and not for some by-purpose of party or self-exaltation.

I believe, however, that I have already crossed the confines of that province of our subject which belongs rather to historians and their particular works, than to history and anti-history regarded substantively, and without reference to authors. I will affect no regret at having done so; neither will I pretend to see, where the steel-wire of logical distinction might be precisely drawn between the characteristics of the writer, and the thing written.

III.

HISTORIANS.

Pour expliquer en quoi je me rapproche, en quoi je m'éloigne des écoles qui m'ont précédé, il faudroit dire sous quel point de vue j'envisage la méthode historique. Mais pour traiter de la méthode, il faut avoir autorité. Je laisserai parler mon livre. Qu'il dise la méthode, s'il peut.¹

MICHELET.

We are now to enter for a short time the Halls of the Past. To feel ourselves at home, or even upon a familiar footing there, we must come frequently, and linger long. It is a mighty temple, this of Time; and its aisles and galleries are beyond the strength of any man to visit, so as to become acquainted thoroughly with them all, in the brief space ordinarily devoted thereunto. In each are objects of more or less curiosity and worth; in each dwell calmly and apart, artists whose memory is befittingly enshrined by their works. Therefore did they live; thus are they judged. Many of no repute are there, and few men remember, few men honour them;

¹ Preface to the first part of his History of France; p. 7.

like the "minor gods," approached without reverence, and disregarded without fear. Some cannot be propitiated without costly sacrifices of time and labour; but in return, they have varied and invaluable boons to bestow. It is not their function, however, to inspire us with emotions of deep fear or high enthusiasm; vices and virtues are, in their oracles, spoken of as *faits accomplis*; and the general results of misery or comfort, health or disease, occupy the more conspicuous place in their philosophy. Finally, there are the poet-philosophers of all climes and tongues,—the glorious spirits of creative genius,—the ruling deities of that hallowed realm,—the great *ιστορες*,—the faithful and true Witnesses of Time!

A good historical library is a great gallery of art. The first-rate works are few, and far enough between. Let us pay all homage to their majesty,—the true majesty of human nature,—the true testimony upon earth of the divinity that is, and yet is not amongst us,—that seems perennially to claim back this wrecked, though still fair world, as its familiar though long alienated home. Yes—there is in the inexpressible beauty of great works—the royalties of art,—a transient lifting of the veil of commonplace, that hides

out from us a better and a higher world. They are flickerings of that light, which even when most faint, has never altogether died out upon earth,—least hope, left utterly in darkness, had wept itself blind in despair.

Wherein lies the essential difference then, between the productions of genius, and those of meaner merit? I think it lies in the different degree of their vitality. The flesh of Maclise and Rothwell reddens in your grasp; the lips of Mulready and Burton quiver with emotion. It is not merely that their pictures are better drawn or tinted; it is not this or the other trick o' the brush, that renders them thus transcendently vital, animate, life-ful. That might be taught or copied; but it is that which cannot be taught or copied—their power of giving palpability to thoughts seen dimly or fragmentarily heretofore, as in dreams,—herein lies the secret of their sway.

The pictures of the Holy Family by Raphael or Morillo, affect one in a degree wholly indescribable. It is not their beauty as pictures merely. There are fifty as brilliantly painted angels, goddesses, and ladies of fashion, to be seen in the Louvre, or any other great collection: as matter of capricious fancy, it may even be

doubted whether some of these do not wear complexions more delicate, and features more symmetrical than the Madonna. But which of them say with their eyes what her's say? Where is that anxious, mother-proud, wistful blending of faith and doubt,—of misgiving and hope,—of love and fear,—of maternity yet reverence—which speaks from her eyes as she gazes at her Saviour-son? Who can explain wherein this wondrous witchery lies? We can talk of it; but if asked to say briefly *what* it is,—none of us can tell. This is the prerogative of the highest art, to be, and to be confessed, even by its most profound and earnest votaries, to be specific, unanalysable,—a mystery beneficent and glorious, but inscrutable, even as that mystic life to which each yearning of its bosom is devoted.

True history is art in its most noble sense and form. To attempt to analyse its power, or fix with logical distinctness wherein it lies, is vain. The artist himself does not know the secret of his inspiration; how then should we? You ask him why he groups and colours thus, and thus? He cannot tell; if he be a wise man, he will not try to tell. All he knows of the matter is, that his conception of that snatch of life he would record,

is, even as you see; but why is it so and not otherwise,—of that you need look for no account from him. I have known some artists, and many who mistook themselves for artists; I have seldom heard the former try to analyse their own productions, and never without failure. The latter are more explicit on the subject, and succeed in the ascription of their few thoughts better. They have the geography of each suggestion just as it came to them, always at hand. And what they advertise as theirs, with whatever novelty of garniture set off, looks not as if it were their own.

What is the highest praise of a picture or a statue? That it *gains* upon you; that you don't see half-way into it at first; that it needs, and that it repays study; in other words, that it is not summarily appreciable. This, too, is Shakespeare's praise,—that they who know him best, see most to wonder at, and to worship in him. And this is the real test of histories. I am sure that no great history can be half appreciated at the first reading. That is its glory—the good of it. Indeed, if you but consider it, the thing is inevitable. A rarely tempered, deeply sensitive, idealizing, sympathetic mind, looks hard at man-

hood's working, under certain influences, and embalms its recollections of its own deep sympathy and joy and sorrow. Is manhood's working in itself a simple thing? Is it not the most indescribably entangled thing? And what should its picture be? Take it for certain, that the man who offers to spell it all plain to you, so that you may read it off hand, get it by rote, and have it all ready for immediate and direct application,—neither has seen with his soul, nor has a soul capable of seeing, the vitalities of that working which it is so invaluable to have pourtrayed.

History is an epic drama, and is tested not unsimilarly. An industrious man, ambitious of the fame, and unconscious that he lacks the many powers of insight, ideality, personification, which can alone create historic or imaginary beings,—goes methodically to work, bent on being famous. He spends much time in gathering his materials, setting them in order, and getting them ready for exhibition. All the characters are dressed in full costume, and every buckle is in keeping. The scenery is painted “from drawings made upon the spot.” The speeches all roll in the most approved manner out of the mouth;—excellent speeches too,—reasoning the points

lucidly, and evincing much premeditation. The author himself sits in the prompter's box; the foot-notes are all snuffed clear; after due mock-humble prologue, the curtain rises, and the play begins. Begins and ends. The audience think it a most excellent play; do not by any means regret having postponed other engagements for its sake; upon reflection, after they get home, agree unanimously 'twas well worth the cost,—chat pleasantly about it during supper,—dream of everything, except the play,—strongly recommend their friends next morning to go see it,—but never think of going themselves again. 'Twas a “capital play, and the author ought to be supported: the plot was so well laid, and the story was so interesting. Pray,—which of the scenes did you like best; or which of the characters made most impression on you?” “I'm not exactly sure; I don't recollect the *name*;—there was something about one, I remember,—I thought it very well *done* at the time;—ah, yes—it was the Jew.” But not the Jew that Shakespeare drew. *His* influence is not a sum to be worked out by question and answer, or whipping of the fagged wits. One living image from his populous brain has made its home in a thousand hearts, that

knew not half its worth and beauty ; while other compositions, which they took infinitely more deliberate pains to understand, and whose import they have perchance completely gathered, have lain dead in their memories awhile, and then passed into irreclaimable oblivion.

And thus dissimilar are the results of historic compilation and creation. The one is good and desirable in its way ; only let us understand in what way,—and that it is the way of the head, not the way of the heart. Far be it from me, to bid you dash aside the cup of cold water offered in truth's name. But I wish you to take it for no more than it is worth ; and I point you rather to the wine-cup of wisdom, filled by the truly great men of the feast, from the living fountain of their own deep spirit. It is of this I would especially bid you to drink,—if ye would feel your hearts uplifted, and your bondage loosed,—your thoughts of man, and of his lot enlarged,—your sympathy for man and for his weakness touched,—your bosom nerved to emulous and death-forgetting energy, for **THE RIGHT** and for **THE TRUE**. This is the power of history.

There are many subjects whose accurate delineation is indeed incapable of that dramatic

unity which constitutes the peculiar charm of national biography. Our sympathy is most easily and deeply moved by the life of an individual or a nation ; but there is a life which is different from these, yet full of power and worth. Men are as often bound together in their hopes, thoughts, sufferings, and joys, by the ties of a common avocation or a common faith as by those of country or of race. Are not great principles as hereditary as great names ? and are not the attainments that link man to man, in spite of all the differences of climate, language, and condition, as exalted and enduring,—as full of moral and intellectual life, as the most devoted loyalty or self-denying patriotism ? Nay must we not frequently altogether fail of comprehending the springs of national development and action, if we have not carefully studied the character and progress of the industry, religion, and literature of the time ? And for each of these we stand in need of a teacher capable of discerning wherein their vitality consists, of genially appreciating its peculiar nature, and of vividly depicting its influence on society and on individuals.

The historian in the great and lofty sense is a poet ; and one essential difference between prose

and poetry is, that while the latter describes, convinces, or obliterates previous impressions, the former affects our minds by the unity of the images it reveals as in a mirror. The mirror may be treacherous and untrue; great men are sometimes false, and like all other men, they are liable to error. But in the main, the mirrorings of genius are more instructive, and with all their blemishes better worth studying, than the cold dead heaps of labour and learning.

Looking along the walls of our best historic galleries, how few poets—kings of art—time-mirrors—do we find: how few! Still there are some. Let us look at—into them rather, for a little while, instead of tiring our eyes perusing the ignoble crowd of imitations, daubs, and transcripts.

And, first, what is this—with setting or frame,—a nine sided crystal, clear as the white noonlight—lustrous as the evening star; with traces of antiquity about it, yet not old; venerable, but still full of young immortal buoyancy; two thousand years of age, yet nowise obsolete; in affable and cheery talk as neighbourly as though of yesterday? Old friend,—most elo-

quent of guides,—faithful counsellor,—man, in all man's wants and heart-failing, yet more than man in all man's goodness, eloquence, and bravery—History's king—HERODOTUS⁴—what words befit thy eulogy? There is no wearisome preliminary apologetic mud to be waded through, before you get to his orchard gate; but it swings on its easy hinges there, and seems to say, all that I have you are welcome to. There is no badly acted bashfulness or no-reason reasons, for his offering you his notions of things and men. If you don't want to hear, 'tis to be supposed you will go your way; if you do want to hear, tarry and listen. And there, in the sunshine of his home, the green old man sits talking of his travels and research in foreign lands, and what he recollects to have heard there,—wondrous tales of wonderful knowledge—knowledge that, in the main, no cavil of subsequent centuries has been able to break down. Here and there a grotesque legend, full of meaning and mythic grace, appears, but under no critical gibbet, with sentence of imposture scrawled above it. Herodotus never dreamt of pausing to set up

⁴ It was Cicero who gave him the well known title of "Father of History."

finger-posts of notification where the broken stones of literal fact begin, and where the flowery by-path of illustration ends.

Before his time there were probably many chronicles of particular places, and ballads in prose, that recounted the fortunes of a hero, or a dynasty.⁶ But the idea of a national epic was rocked to and fro in its rhythmic cradle, till the days of the Persian war. Then, as in due time, it rose, in the young majesty of emancipated art ; and all men hailed it with joy. While national story was but a succession of deeds of half-fabulous chivalry, the bard was the best of chroniclers ; and his tuneful measure was a needful urn, wherein the scanty remains of the earliest time might be borne safe from the fire of oblivion. But triumph and danger,—heroism and its fame, were no longer the privileges of chieftainry, 'Twas the people of Greece who defied Darius, and hunted Xerxes home. Homer might sing “ the wrath of Achilles ;” but a more orchestral strain befitted “ the indignation of a people.”⁷

⁵ See RENNELL's geography of Herodotus : and an admirable article in the 149th No. of Blackwood's Magazine, entitled “ the Philosophy of Herodotus.”

⁶ THIRLWALL, vol. ii. chap. xii.

⁷ HERODOTUS, vii. 132, 133.

Herodotus asked a hearing. It was during the Olympic games, whereto all tribes of Greeks had come. With fascinated ear they listened to the magic tale,—the epic prose,—the immortalization of deeds, which the elder men amongst them had borne their part in,—to HISTORY! 'Twere vain to paint the ecstasy of that hour.—the ecstasy of a nation let to look at themselves in the glass of glory for the first time,—the ecstasy of him, who had spent the prime of his life in preparation for that hour.⁸ There is one little incident of the scene, however, worth remembering. Olorus, a citizen of Athens, was among the auditory, accompanied by his son, who scarce had numbered fifteen years. The thoughtful and noble hearted boy drank in every word of the recitation with his whole attention, and when it was ended burst into tears. Amid the tumult of applause, Herodotus was struck by his emotion, and with prophetic insight, said to his father,—“the flame is kindled in this young heart!” The boy’s name was Thucydides.

⁸ “When in early life Herodotus devoted himself to the task of collecting the scattered materials of his history, he did not think himself qualified for the work, until he visited every country to which the Greeks of his time had access; everywhere examining documents, conversing with the learned, and collating evidence.”—TAYLOR’S prefacc.

The work of Thucydides is that of a statesman. It is a proud trophy of great forbearance, and great love of country, under terrible exasperation. Thucydides was a man of eminent political rank at Athens. His party were beaten, and he was ostracised. In his retirement he indited the story of that memorable struggle of parties and principles, that rent all Greece during his time. People say he is partial;—to be sure he is. I would not give a fig for his history if he was not. But he is most just, most true, most Greek. His partizanship never stimulates him to traduce his country. He glorifies Athens even in his exile; not cowering, or deprecating her anger, but giving her his blessing while he persists in saying—you have wronged me.⁹ He is less luxuriant, less garrulous, less picturesque, than his predecessor of Halicarnassus; but not less truly ideal. In Herodotus, we have the mingled dance of warriors and festal maids; in Thucydides, the procession of thoughtful citizens with their children to their altar.

Thucydides is a doric portico, chaste, solemn, built on a model which no time can cease to ad-

⁹ The incidental way in which he alludes to the opportunities his exile gave him of collecting materials for his annals, is truly noble.—See THIRLWALL, vol. iii. chap. 23.

mire, which no ornament or trick of dizening can improve. Its embellishments are not here or there, unequally scattered up and down; but are so identified with the noble fane, so thoroughly made part and parcel of the whole, that they cannot be distinguished or specified apart from it.

One of the most remarkable names in Grecian history is that of Xenophon. Like his predecessors, he was a man of action, and chronicled the deeds of his time. But as the spirit of that time was different, so was the temper of the witness, and the character of his testimony. Herodotus sang what he felt; and his song, like his fervid day, is passionate, credulous, thoroughly earnest. Thucydides fell on more prosaic times; and his noble eloquence is "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought." But it is manly sorrow for the ills around him. Xenophon was a sophist. If he believed anything, it was the exceeding profitableness of keeping one's temper, and the prudence of affecting to consult oracles.¹⁰ Herodotus was an honest citizen; Thucydides, a

¹⁰ He went specially to Delphi before entering Cyrus' army; but he took care not to ask Apollo, whether he would be justifiable in joining the enemies of his country; and for this insincerity he was upbraided by his friend Socrates.—ANAB. iii. 2.

baffled statesman ; Xenophon, a man of the world : Herodotus, a patriot-poet ; Thucydides, a philosophic patriot ; Xenophon, a metaphysician, with whom patriotism was a prejudice, and poetry and religion fables. I know that he consulted omens ; of course he did ; that was judicious in a general, and graceful in a writer ;¹¹ but as for faith, I imagine that he saw little into that. All three were personally brave, and bore themselves like true men in the fray ; Xenophon's fame as a general, moreover, has become immortal, and by all accounts deservedly. But there is one damning difference between his soldiership and theirs. They fought for Carian and Athenian liberty ; Xenophon's sword was first drawn for a Persian² prince, and last for a Spartan king,—seldom if ever for Athens.¹³

¹¹ ANAB. iii. 2 ; vi. 6—9.

¹² Herodotus having left his native city in early life, to escape the oppression it endured, was living in retirement at Samos, when the news reached him of a party being formed for the overthrow of Lygdamis the tyrant of Halicarnassus. He quitted his retirement, and joined his countrymen in their ineffectual but valiant struggle to liberate their country. Thucydides was equally unfortunate in arms ; but no breath of calumny has ever sullied his reputation as a brave man.

¹³ He says himself that he “ was not a soldier by profession when he volunteered ” in the army of Cyrus.—iii. 2.—After the return of the Ten Thousand, he engaged as a mercenary in the service of other states, and received peculiar honours from the deadly rival of his country, Sparta. Nor is it unworthy of note, that it was by the hand of Xenophon's son, Epaminondas fell.

I find it difficult to speak to you of Xenophon. I can never look upon his lofty emotionless aspect without pain. His works are singularly expressive of the transition state of the Greeks, during his time ; and the more so, from his apparent unconsciousness of any thing anomalous or extraordinary therein. His history reminds me of the clear glass lid of a state coffin,—so stainless, smooth, and cold—cold as the varnished corpse that it reveals. Yet, look through it ; 'tis well for all men to look through it. Beautiful Greece lies there,—even as she lay after the poison had caught hold upon her vitals. She looks as fair and full of energy as ever ; her hand still grasps the world-daunting spear ; her brazen helm is bright above her scarlet¹⁴ war vest, as in the hours of her untainted prime. Judging by the unbroken surface one would say,—she is not dead,—

Beauty's ensign yet
Is crimson on her lip, and on her cheek ;
And death's pale flag hath not advanced there.

But the pulse of Greek vitality is still. Her smile is but mechanical,—but the congealed rip-

¹⁴ XENOPHON, *Anab.* i. 7.—By the Spartan law, the same colour was ordained as clothing for the dead. PLUTARCH, in *vit. Lycur.*

ple that last played across her countenance. She almost seems to laugh; pah! it is a mercenary, mock laugh,—as unlike the young spontaneous virgin note of joy, as the paid laugh of a harlot.

Greece had in fact “forsaken the way of her youth,” and fallen from her first estate of innocence. The eyes that had flashed scorn upon “the great king,” when he dared to trifle with her maiden honour, grew fame-dazzled, and went wandering after unhallowed adulation. She longed for alien homage, and strayed from home to hear it. The heart that had harboured formerly but one chaste devotion, sighed for foreign charms.¹⁵ The nationality, to whose hero breast her’s had beaten true, no longer held her whole affections, and never after dared to raise his once proud head again, or if he did, ’twas to meet the cuckold’s jeer. For money and for applause, Greece was ready to wear any garb, to offer any

¹⁵ During the Peloponnesian war, and the period immediately following, “there had arisen a new political vocation,—the performance of “military service for hire,—which thousands of the Greeks, who had no “inclination for the tranquil pursuits of citizenship, and were grown “weary of their country, embraced with eagerness. They sought to “gratify their roaming disposition in the excitement of adventure “abroad; and instead of attempting to found new settlements, wandered about from place to place, acknowledging neither country nor kindred.”—WACHSMUTH, *Hist. Antiq.* vol. ii. § 74.

prostitution of her influence or person. Evil habit gradually wore away all shame, and she went unblushingly her wanton way. Barbarian gold could buy as many favours as it wished for ; and the valour of Thermopylæ and Salamis had turned public hireling.¹⁶

There are few worse symptoms of the state of education amongst us, than the almost universal preference given to Xenophon, above Herodotus and Thucydides. His equanimity of thought and style, his unexceptional adherence to the rules of grammar, and use of none but dictionary words, has won the hearts of all classical schoolmasters ; and the philosophic and political poison, which is unsuspectingly inhaled from his works, gives them no concern. Their whole attention is rivetted on the curious mechanism, which yields with such apparent ease, so great a number of high-sounding Attic sentences : the quality thereof, and their effect upon the health, they care as little for, as the shopmen who exhibit a new patent stove to their customers, and who would fain persuade you to erect one in your sitting room, and keep the door fast shut all day long, to enjoy the

¹⁶ HERMANN. *Pol. Antiq.* ii. 30.—BÆCKH. *Econ. of Athens*, ii. 21, 22.

indolent heat which it affords. Talk to them of a long walk on the heather, with the sun's blaze upon your brow this moment, and the clear breath of the hill the next,—and the smoulderers will stare at you, and cynically ask if “you mean to compare the varying sunshine and rude breeze, with the even atmosphere of their oven?” ’Tis tolerably plain, however, that if you want your sons to be robust, hearty-hearted, self-helping, country-loving citizens,—not mere utilitarian, sceptical cosmopolites,—you will accustom them to that, whose respiration alone can invigorate and strengthen them.

Polybius is the connecting link between the Greek and Roman annalists. A citizen of Achaia by birth and education, he had filled exalted stations in his own country, ere the arbitrary mandate of conquest compelled him to fix his residence at Rome.¹⁷ It was there he undertook to write the eventful story of his own times.¹⁸ He wrote in his native tongue; but the whole tenour and spirit of the work is Roman.

¹⁷ HAMPTON'S preface to the English translation.

¹⁸ Reviewing the chief events “which gave the Romans the sovereignty of the world,” he says, “I was myself engaged in some of them, concurred in the counsels that brought about others, and I have “had personal knowledge of almost all of them.” iii. 1.

He tells us at the outset, that his object was to “show in what manner, and under what forms of rule, nearly all the habitable world was in half a century reduced beneath the Roman yoke;” and to demonstrate, that “this vast design was formed and executed upon the noblest principles.”¹⁹

The degenerate Greeks having made a poor resistance to the invading Romans, took revenge upon their masters, by endeavouring to write down their exploits. ’Twas fate, or the force of circumstances,—’twas everything or anything but the intrepidity of the victors, and the unworthiness of the vanquished. Polybius was probably disgusted with all this; it is certain that he fell into the opposite extreme. He composed his history to do justice to Rome; and, if we would judge him justly, we must take it as, in some sort, a reply to the cavillings of the conquered. Its intrinsic merits as a record are truly great. It is the only original picture²⁰ that remains of the greatest duel ever fought on earth,—that between Rome and Carthage. Though time has gnawed

¹⁹ Hist. i. 1.

²⁰ For Livy, who is believed to have borrowed largely from Polybius, did not write until a hundred and fifty years afterwards.

far into its once ample canvas,²¹ enough remains to testify how noble were its proportions, and what ability he brought to their delineation. His sources of information were peculiar, owing to his friendship with the chief actors in the memorable scene; and of this inestimable advantage he naturally boasts on more than one occasion.²² As a political chronicle there are few documents of equal value; and in the nibbling criticisms on its "want of ornament" and "descriptive episodes," I am not disposed to join. A great man, be he actor or chronicler, poet or inventor, must be judged by the law of his specific nature, or by none. To be able to detect this law, seems to me a great thing; to overlook or to deny it, a blind and stupid, and a most pernicious thing. Such denial is in fact the very taproot of intolerance. Each self-lit spirit moves in an orbit of its own, or is the centre of its own sphere. Tributary and subsidiary lights of history, art, science, speculation,—are measurable by ordinary rules,—are of a kind, a class, and may be condemned or praised for their relative merits,—

²¹ Only five books have been preserved entire; there are fragments of twelve more.

²² x. 2.

their comparative powers. Almanacs may be contrasted with almanacs, whether they be French, English, or American. Their component items may not be the same ; but they all alike profess to be sweeping-brushes of daily common-place, and they may justly therefore be contrasted, and judged by one another. Ordinary history likewise may be so judged of. It undertakes to fabricate, put together, hair-stuff, and set on four wheels, a certain easy vehicle for cheap and expeditious trundling over a given interval. The accidents of shape or bulk may vary ; but a family coach is a family coach, all the world over ; and you have an undoubted right, when asked to get into a new one, to prod the cushions, look at the axles, and see if the whole machine be according to the most approved plan of family coach building.

But there is no "approved plan" for building works of original art. The very necessity for their being called into existence, by a man of creative genius, consists in the fact that the world does not know how to make such things for itself. Indeed the poor world was not thinking of its want—did not know its want. The great work of a master mind, is a new revelation

of truth. And if we wish to profit by the revelation, we must prepare to look at it as a new thing, governed by its own laws, and to be judged thereby.

I do not therefore cavil with Polybius for his way of working; he was not only the best judge of how to say the thing that was in his heart to say, but the only judge of it. But with all my soul I hate and fear him. Had he been a Roman, vaunting of his race, I could forgive his immortal triumphing: t'were natural then, and what is intuitive cannot, I suppose, be altogether wrong. The tiger licks his chops when sated with the warm blood of his prey; when men "without concealment rob and kill,"²³ it seems a part of the imperial instinct to glory in the deed.

²³ I am conscious that this is not the fashionable language held towards Rome; but the duty of using it, if it be just, is but the clearer therefore. I have some doubts, I own, whether the above comparison is not unjust to the tiger; for I am not aware that Natural History contains any instance like that recorded by Livy (xxii. 57.) Many calamities abroad and crimes at home concurred, immediately after the terrible defeat at Cannæ, to fill the minds of the people with dismay. The senate made every effort to rouse and reassure them, least the provinces, regarding Hannibal's victory as decisive, might be lost irredeemably.—"To win back the favour of the gods, extraordinary sacrifices were performed; among the rest a male and female Gaul, and a male and female Greek, were buried alive in the cattle-market." Had Polybius forgotten this, when recounting "the prudence, firmness, eloquence, and inherent excellence," which the Roman government displayed, in that crisis of their fate?—Hist. iii. 12.

But for the trodden to exult,—for the captive to attune his harp in Babel's halls in celebration of the victor,—for an Achaian citizen to undertake the historic vindication of Scipio and Æmilius,—no, I can never look on that as other than a great evil. It is a fearful fraud on human sympathy—a shameful challenge of the deepest truths of nature,—a daring mine laid beneath the very citadel of self-respect. Admitting fully all its worth as art and value as a record, still I wish this history of Polybius never had been written. 'Tis the initiatory hymn of candour²⁴ sung by the enslaved to their conquerors. That the harmonies are fine, and the voice full of melody, makes one but grieve the more. The accomplishment has unhappily proved but too infectious; and the example of Polybius has been gladly followed by all the lacquey-hearted crew, who choose to wear the livery of power rather than to mend the old honest coat of their misfortune, or to set about weaving for themselves a new one. To talk

²⁴ “Unmoved by the ill fate of Greece and his own loss of friends and dignity, he describes even those events which seldom fail to awaken some resentment, grief, or jealous hatred, with all the coldness of an unconcerned spectator; and pays *due* (?) homage to those great qualities, which had raised the structure of the Roman glory upon the ruins of his own degenerate country.”—HAMPTON'S preface, p. 18.

proudly without being able to feel proud, is the vanity of appearing to be impartial, passionless, candid. But this candour, as they call it, is the token of unsoundness, not of health. 'Tis the hectic flush upon the cheek, while decay is busy at his dull work within. Would ye boast your candour towards the man who robbed your daughter of her honour? Would ye parade your friendship with the thief who had made your kindred outcasts? Would ye praise the colour of the plume that was dyed in your mother's blood? Such candour seems to me the unmanliest of sins.

Of Livy. I never open the smooth glittering plates, whereon he engraved his noble creations, without asking myself the question—are not poets then superior to all accidents of birth or education? How such a being could have arisen, grown up to maturity, and expanded to such power and beauty in that atmosphere of steel filings,—seems to me the most inscrutable of things. Of all the great nations upon earth, the Romans had the least of ideality in them. Of all the literatures in the world, the Latin is the least poetical. I dont mean that they had not plenty of rhythmers, prize-ode manufacturers,

hexameter spinners, and cattle of that kind. Oh plenty ! But the raw material they were always obliged to import. Till their intercourse with Greece, they knew about as much of poetry, as the English, before their intercourse with the East, did of silk handkerchiefs. By dint of hard labour and copying they got together a second-hand literature ; and there are dolts in the world who think the copy as good as the original. But in the mass, Roman verse is a field without wild flowers. There is plenty of good solid feeding, of wholesome fattening herbage therein ; but the very colour of the grass is marketable ; it is growing hay, not the spangled luxuriance or many-hued verdure of Arcadia or Asphodel.

How Livy came of such a time and race is wondrous. It is a rock-fount in the dry, sandy, choking desert, springing clear, bubbling, gay, ideal—for Rome's use and sacred to Rome's honour, yet in its intellectual properties most un-Roman. There is more fresh original unborrowed poetry in any one book* of Livy, than in all Horace, Virgil, Lucan, and the rest of them put together. If you have never read his account of the burning of Rome by the Gauls, do so by all means ; and if you are unacquainted with

Livy's language, read the translation, which, though immeasurably inferior, will yet suffice to give you the great leading ideas of the picture. 'Tis not indeed the painting; the warm colouring is lost in transcription; but it is a capital engraving after the picture, and that too is something.

There is no man with whose temper or opinions I have personally less sympathy, than Livy; and there is none with whom I have more—there is no historian of whom I think I have read so much, as Tacitus. Nevertheless I cannot level them as artists. The time for the production of such a work as that of Livy was gone by.²⁵ Livy would not have had the heart to write,²⁶ had he lived a century or two later, in the terrible days of unhappy Tacitus. Livy is the Io Triumphe of a conquering republic, on the eve of its self-destruction;²⁷ Tacitus, the wail of the national heart as it sank to die.²⁸

²⁵ "Veteris populi Romani prospera vel adversa claris scriptoribus memorata sunt; temporibusque Augusti dicendis non defuere decora ingenia, donec gliscente adulatione deterrerentur. Tiberii ac Neronis res, ob metum falsæ; &c.*—Ann. i. l.

²⁶ "Ego hoc laboris præmium petam, ut me a conspectu malorum, quæ nostra vidit ætas, tantisper, certe dum prisca illa tota mente repeto, avertam, omnis expers curæ, quæ scribentis animum, etsi non flectere a vero, sollicitum tamen efficere possit."—Liv. præf.

²⁷ * * * hæc nova, quibus jam pridem prævalentis vires se ipsæ conficiunt.—Liv. præf.

²⁸ "Manebant etiam tum vestigia morientis libertatis."—Ann. i. 74.

In this respect, I am inclined to look upon this work of Tacitus, as one of the most stupendous efforts of truly moral greatness that we know of. I allude especially to the triumph of self-sustaining energy it manifests. In most other biographies of nations, there are magnificent materials to work upon; Tacitus had worse than none. In all of them there is likewise, the great ingredient of antagonist powers in action, to be depicted; but resistance was dead in his time. Herodotus is the chronicle of Grecian chivalry—the narrative of the most brilliant struggle that the world has seen, of moral discipline and daring, with gigantic brutal force. Thucydides is an antithesis from end to end. Livy tells how the blood hound cub was born, and how it grew,²⁹ amid every sort of danger, from its suckling time in the wolf's den,³⁰ till its matured ferocity, when every leaf in the forests of Asia and of Gaul had learned to tremble at its imperial howl.³¹ Polybius, too, had the same canvas to tint, though his colouring is more uniform.

²⁹ "Ad illa pro se quisque acriter intendat animum, quæ vita, qui mores fuerint: per quos viros, quibusque artibus, domi militiæque, et partum et auctum imperium sit."—LIV. præf.

³⁰ LIV. Hist. i. 4.

³¹ The "contents" of the 147th book which now alone remains, speaks of the victories of Drusus over the Germans in the time of Augustus.

But Tacitus had a civilized desert for his landscape,—a moral grave yard for his scene. The conflict of political principles and powers was over and past.³² The cataract had worn itself down. No man dreamed any more of a democracy; no man imagined the restoration of an aristocratic commonwealth was possible. The provinces had ceased to revolt; Numidia was become a domestic corn field;³³ and the Greeks had learned to dance gracefully in their chains.³⁴ As far as the circumspective eye could reach, there was nothing to be seen, but the rotting superincumbent weight of Rome.³⁵ In the babel chatter of the thronging of the forum, or in the dim silence of the night watch, no man any longer whispered—change.³⁶ Had it been otherwise—had the sodden sense of helpless unresistance to imperial despotism, been less thoroughly felt as universal and inevitable—Tacitus dared not have

³² "Tum primum e Campo comitia ad Patres translata sunt: nam ad eam diem, etsi potissima arbitrio principis, quædam tamen studiis tribuum fiebant: neque populus ademptum jus questus est, nisi inani rumore."—TACITUS, *Ann.* i. 15.

³³ "Mari oceano aut omnibus longinquis septum imperium."—i. 9.—*Ann.* ii. 52.—*Hist.* i. 78.

³⁴ *Ann.* iv. 14; 58.

³⁵ *De Mor. Germ.* 42.

³⁶ *Hist.* i. 1.—11.

publicly let fall those scalding tears, which form the current of his history.

But think what it was to have the heart to write at all, at such a time ! Think what it was for one, whose soul was untainted by his time, to write of it ! Think what the strength of that spirit must have been to produce a work like his, and that, despite the oppressive consciousness that he should never live to see the day when it could be appreciated, possibly without any distinct hope that it should ever be so. All the rest had their auditory of enthusiastic partizans or countrymen. With all of them it was the singing of a triumphal song, in the choral echoes whereof ten thousand kindred voices seemed to join. The very anticipations of such a reception,—such a recognition of the worth of their labours when completed, was in itself no mean inspiration to the authors as they toiled.³⁷ But Tacitus speaks like one of the seers of old, who felt they had a lonely and unpopular mission to fulfil. It is the cry of a solitary man amidst the weltering sea of infamy and bondage, and deathliness of unresisted and

³⁷ “So great was the fame of Livy in his own life-time, that persons “came from the extremity of Spain and Gaul, for the purpose of beholding so celebrated a historian.”—THOMPSON’S Notes on Suetonius, p. 210.

irresistible oppression—a solemn curse poured forth upon the faithlessness and brutish triviality³⁸ of a corrupted world—an isolated, but irrefragable testimony borne against a state of unnatural and artificially superinduced evil,³⁹ for which if he saw a remedy, he deemed it no part of his duty to propound it.

Ere we pass from classic times, it is right to own how deep a debt of historic gratitude we owe to Plutarch and Suetonius. Strictly speaking, they are to be classed among biographers, rather than historians; for though the latter chose the twelve Cæsars as the subject of his pencil,⁴⁰ each figure is separately drawn, and the occasional views we get of Italy and the Provinces, are introduced but as appropriate backgrounds. The distinctive aim of the series, is to give faithful likenesses of the men, as each of them in turn played the part of a devil upon his way to divinity.⁴¹

³⁸ TACITUS, Hist. i. 4. ³⁹ Ann. xv. 44.

⁴⁰ Suetonius Tranquillus was secretary to Adrian. Having incurred the domestic jealousy of that prince, he occupied himself in his seclusion with "The Lives of the first Twelve Emperors," the only work of his that we possess; the "Lives of the Early Kings," and a "Catalogue of the Great Men of Rome," fragments of which alone remain.—Biog. Univ. xxxix.

⁴¹ Bolingbroke has used the same idea with his usual felicity of phrase.

The fearful reality of colouring, which Suetonius allowed himself in depicting their imperial majesties, is the reason usually assigned for the neglect of his writings. But his indelicacy is never wanton like that of Horace, nor immoral like that of Terence or of Virgil. He is certainly often coarse, and that is unquestionably a very great fault; but perhaps if there were somewhat less prudery in our schools and colleges, there would be a little more practical anxiety, to keep poetic filth and historic falsehood out of the hands of our youth. Meanwhile, it is stupid and sad, to hear grave worthies mutter scandalous epithets against the Titian of Roman chroniclers, while they cross-examine every boy in the catechism of the Hellenic mythology, and take care that he shall be intimately conversant with the untranslatable accomplishments of Doric education.⁴² Where the line ought to be drawn, I am not here to determine; the subject is encumbered with many difficulties, and their value should not be underrated. But I will never let an opportunity pass without pelting that hypocrisy, which, shutting fast one eye deliberately at

⁴² PLUTARCH, vit. Lycur.—ARISTOTLE, Polit. ii. 7, 10—MÜLLER'S Dorians, iv. 4.

the license of congenial writers, opens the other in a stare of horror, at no greater freedom in the assailants of tyranny and of tyrants. Swift has defined "a *nice* man" to be "a man of nasty ideas;" and I confess I usually feel a most profound suspicion of the gentleman's morality, who, with Ovid in his hand, is offended at the plainer, but far less prurient speaking of Suetonius.

As for Plutarch, the only unity in his celebrated work, is that of a banquet, where numerous effigies of the great and good, whom fate has scattered among differing times and kindreds, are assembled round the hearth of fame. The formality of public attitude is laid aside. There is a certain negligent domestic air about nearly all of Plutarch's figures. They sit, teaching their children how to live and die;⁴³ or kneel before the household gods,⁴⁴ or sleep securely in the inner chamber,⁴⁵ or with the graceless marks of ill-spent hours upon their brow, stagger homewards at day-dawn.⁴⁶ And this is called mere "gossip!" Ah, friends, this indeed is history. It is for want of this "gossip" touching the notable

⁴³ PLUTARCH: in vit. P. Æmil:—in vit. Serto.

⁴⁴ In vit. Coriolan.

⁴⁵ In vit. Cato.

⁴⁶ In vit. Alcib.

men, who have in succession ruddered the track of human fate through time's unstable tide, that half the annals which are piled in dust-laden heaps, are dumb, vain, and unintelligible. The outer show of an earnest man can never tell us whither and whence he is panting.⁴⁷ At best he can himself explain but very imperfectly what he *is at*,—(forgive the phrase,—I know no other that will convey what I would express.) Even this very outer show itself is a mere average husk of greater or less dimensions, until some one who knows its curious fibre, points out to our indiscriminating eye, its distinctive and peculiar qualities.

Any good chronology will tell you that the son of Lysimachus was a great man; that he lived in poverty, though possessed of extraordinary power; that having done his country priceless services, and himself none of a personal kind, he was driven into exile; and that it is doubtful whether his bones were laid at Athens.⁴⁸ What inference can be drawn from this bald narrative? That he was a popular adventurer who misplayed his game, and falling into contempt, was ostra-

⁴⁷ In vit. Solon.

⁴⁸ In vit. Aristid.

cised? Not so; Aristides' fame stands clear as the white light of noon. Plutarch has etched his moral form and attitude. There is no bend of solicitation in it. His preeminence is won by calm force of character, effortless, selfless, irresistible. He does not speak like a popular man; I am sure he never was a popular man; he was above popularity and its tricks of sway.⁴⁹ He was thinking for Athens, when she was not thinking for herself. She honoured him, believed him, trusted him, and—*hated* him.⁵⁰ It seems doubtful whether Marathon could ever have been fought, much less won, but for Aristides.⁵¹ It is certain the Athenians thought so; and yet with an unflattering, unyielding, perhaps a cold-seeming man, the sense of such and similar obligations grew intolerable.

Plutarch has told us all this in one brief anecdote, which, whether it came down traditionally to him, or was coined to image forth the

⁴⁹ PLUTARCH, in vit. Arist.

⁵⁰ "He, too, like Themistocles, had the welfare of Athens at heart, but simply and singly—not as an instrument, but as an end. * * * Characters like that of Aristides are seldom loved; and so probably there were many at Athens, who were offended by the vigilance and severity with which he detected abuses, and guarded the public welfare."—THIRLWALL: Hist. ii. 15.

⁵¹ HERODOTUS, vi. 39.

vital truth regarding Aristides, is invaluable as history, and admirable as a stroke of Art. A poor man, not being acquainted with his features, asks the unpopular statesman to write his own envied name upon the voting shell. "Wherefore, good friend?—Has Aristides ever wronged thee?" "No,—but I am sick of hearing men say that he is the '*the Just*.'" There is not a word of further expostulation; he writes his name upon the shell; and leaves the city with a prayer, wherein, if there be something of reproach, there is nothing of revenge, and a world of sublime pity and unselfishness.⁵²

While he remained in exile, the invading hive of Persia swarmed again.⁵³ The Athenians then remembered Aristides, and "trembled lest he should now join the foe; but they knew not the man."⁵⁴ This was a heart, whose motives and rewards were self-contained. When the heart of Athens failed, she turned to her injured but unresentful son for succour. He came; her spirit was relit within her, and caught reassurance at his quenchless eye.

⁵² "May the people of Athens never see the day, when they will feel the want of Aristides."—PLUTARCH, in vit. Arist.

⁵³ HERODOTUS, vii. 27.

⁵⁴ PLUTARCH, in vit. Arist.

To suffer woes which hope thinks infinite ;
 To forgive wrongs darker than death or night ;
 To love and bear ; to hope 'till hope creates
 From its own wreck the thing it contemplates ;
 Neither to change, nor flatter, nor repent ;
 This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be
 Good, great, and joyous, beautiful and free ;
 This is alone life, joy, empire, and victory !⁵⁵

It is palpable that Aristides was an essential hue in the complexion of that signal time. Omit him and his influence, and the self-denying virtue of Greek resistance would fall out of joint. I think it utterly impossible to limit the moral value, the national importance of such a man,—so Greek in spirit, and yet so un-Greek in disposition ;—so keenly alive to all the wants and wishes of his country, and yet in his whole life so fine a satire upon her vanity,—such a rebuke to her vengeful and avaricious temper.⁵⁶ Now I know not where, except in Plutarch, you can get acquainted with this man, so as to form any intelligent conception of his character.

But I doubt greatly if any of us is aware, how much our earliest notions of the life of Greece and Rome are directly attributable to Plutarch.

⁵⁵ SHELLEY : *Prometheus Unbound*.

⁵⁶ WACHSMUTH, *Hist. Antiq.* ii. 57.—THIRLWALL, *Hist.* ii. 15.

It is said that Marlborough, when appointed prime minister, declared he knew little of English history, beyond what he had from Shakespeare's plays; and I believe the Brutus and Coriolanus that rise up to our imagination, when those names are uttered, in the main depend on their vivid personifications by the dramatist. But where did Shakespeare get them? Not from the Greek and Latin annalists, for they contain them not. Not out of his own creative brain; for even supposing it possible that he could, in the course of a busy and distracted life, have thoroughly mastered all the minute intricacies of a bygone time and mode of living so utterly unlike his own, and from which no embers of traditionary light could fall, so as to live a whole classic world in imagination o'er again,—it is still incredible that he should have happened on the many personal incidents, that are to be found both in his plays and in the ancient biographer. Nor is even this all. North's translation of Plutarch was published some years⁵⁷ before "Antony and Cleopatra" or "Julius Cæsar" was composed.⁵⁸ There are innumerable

⁵⁷ The edition from which I quote, is dated 1595.

⁵⁸ It is supposed that neither of these was written until 1607, or 1608.—See MALONE, &c.

passages, not similar or coincident in sentiment merely, but identical in quaint and racy inversions of phrase and turns of expression; so much so, that to compare them is literal proof that Shakespeare made large use of what so admirably suited his purpose.⁵⁹

Why do I instance this? Not of a verity to detract from the English dramatist, but the rather to make him bear the best of testimony to Plutarch's worth. Old Thomas North opens up to him this mine of ready hewn and curiously polished gems, and he, having the true appreciating eye of genius, and the true absorbent faculty of genius, perceives that they are beyond improvement or imitation in their way; and having furnished them anew with suitable settings, he adapts these antique jewels to his own right royal crown.

Consistently with the limits to which I am necessarily limited, it is wholly impossible to dwell, however briefly, on the minor historians of ancient times, or, what would probably be of more interest in your eyes, on the chroniclers of the middle ages.⁶⁰ I had intended to have pre-

⁵⁹ See Appendix.

⁶⁰ See Biographical Index.

sented to you sketches of Froissart, De Comines, and Matthew Paris,—the three whose writings have proved perhaps of most importance to posterity. But we must hasten by their dim-lit shrines, hoping,—perchance delusively,—that we may revisit them together at some other time.

A great portion of the fifteenth century had rolled away before Greek literature became known in Europe. The timely improvements in paper-making, and the discovery of printing, contributed not a little towards the rapid revival of learning. Manuscripts had ceased to be indiscriminately destroyed; gradually they began to be preserved as curiosities, copied, examined, sought for. Still there were no libraries worthy of the name; and the great works of antiquity were accessible only to a few scattered and mutually unknown students.⁶¹ It is wholly impossible to overrate the magnitude of these defects in the organs of European vision; perhaps it is impossible to comprehend the difference it would make to us at the present day, had the collection of

⁶¹ It was not till 1458, that the University of Paris could be induced to name a professor of the Greek language.—HALLAM: *Literature of Europe in the Fifteenth Century*, iii. 26. The first book printed with Greek type, was in 1476.—Id. 46.

books and manuscripts, and the translation of the Greek historians and philosophers been delayed for another century or two.

The imperishable fame of triumphing over both these obstacles to the revival of classic thought and art, belongs to pope Nicholas V. It was by him that the library of the Vatican was founded; and it was extended during his brief reign,⁶² to upwards of five thousand volumes, a vast collection for that age. At his instance, and under his auspices, parts of Xenophon and Plato, and the whole of Polybius, Herodotus, Diodorus, Strabo and Thucydides, were translated by different learned men, whom the munificent pontiff had gathered round him.⁶³

The vivifying effect of all this was not immediately perceptible; but the following age beheld the spirit of history descending once more to earth, and animating many and faithful witnesses with an enthusiastic faith in her cause. In France, England, Spain, the furniture-brokering style of history gave place to bold and manly narratives of the moral life of nations. The writings of De Mezerai, Buchanan, and Herrera, are great

⁶² From 1447 to 1455.

⁶³ HALLAM: *Literature of Europe*, iii. 2, 3.

trophies of the restoration to life of natural and indigenous literature.

But there is one name greater than them all, which it is impossible to pass over silently. Machiavelli stands in his age alone. If the men of that time shall ever perish, then he will die out last.⁶⁴ He heads the crowd; he was the earliest of them; he overtops them all, now that distance masses them in our view together. I know you do not enter cordially into such appreciation of the man; the cant word fabricated out of his name rings in your ears; and you are, I dare say, making up your minds doggedly, even while I speak, to hate him for a plausible villain, diplomatist, motive-juggler, and so forth. But tell me this, do you know what you mean by Machiavellism? If so, you are wiser than most men I have met with; for, though I have often asked the question of those, whom I have heard chirp harshly on that note, I have found few who could give it a consistent answer.

⁶⁴ This appears to be Schelling's opinion. F. Schlegel calls him "the only writer of modern Europe who can stand a comparison in style and skill with the first historians of antiquity;" (*Hist. of Literature*, i. 9-) and Sismondi, while he bestows equal praise upon his splendid talents, bears cordial testimony to his moral and political integrity.—*Hist. View of the Lit. of South of Europe*, ii. 15.

But nicknames are irresistible. This of Machiavellism has for long enough been in vogue as a piece of party slang,—that laconic mode of accusing, condemning, and sentencing to the pillory any luckless wight whom one can make nothing of. But I tell you, it is wholly unpardonable to make defamatory sport with the name or character of any man. This is the true tar-and-feathering,—the most wanton and intolerable of tyrannies.

I ask you but for common justice towards this man,—a great and gifted man, confessedly,—a much wronged and misinterpreted man, as many good men have believed.⁶⁵ Put the slang proverb by, at all events. Wherein he is blameworthy, blame him; but judge the man fearlessly and fairly. Let his works and life speak. He was the author of a history of his own country, which Hallam, who condemns unsparingly his theoretic works, has truly said,—“is enough to

⁶⁵ “*The Discourses upon Livy*, written about 1516, the period of his disgrace, demonstrate that his real principles were constant and uniform, and that his views and observations were ever characterised by justice, depth, and earnestness. * * * The *Annals of Florence* are a most imposing work, and have entitled Machiavelli to a rank original and apart among the greatest of historians; and the more so, because the masters of antiquity had left no model for this species of the art.”—*Biog. Univ.* xxvi. p. 54.

“ immortalize his name. Seldom has a more
 “ giant stride been made in any department of
 “ literature, than by this judicious, clear, and ele-
 “ gant history: for the preceding historical works,
 “ whether in Italy or out of it, had no claim to
 “ the praise of classical compositions, while this
 “ has ranked among the greatest of that order.
 “ Machiavelli was the first who gave at once a
 “ general and a luminous developement of great
 “ events in their causes and connections.”⁶⁶ Is
 this a man to be mobbed, and pelted, and
 trampled down? Or is the base hypocrisy of
 those who hug Hume for a domestic idol,⁶⁷ and
 talk reverently of Bacon’s sycophantic praise of
 Henry VII. addressed to his royal descendant,⁶⁸
 —to sit in judgment upon him, who called his-
 tory from the grave of a thousand years, and pre-
 sented her once more to mankind in a robe—not
 of angelic snowiness perhaps, but of transcend-

⁶⁶ Literature of Europe in the sixteenth century, vii. 43. Yet Hallam falls in with the current notion of him.

⁶⁷ Hume keeps up the farce of saying that princes should not break their word; but he varnishes the perfidy of Charles with such pains, as to make it almost pass for downright honesty.

⁶⁸ The life and reign of Henry VII. though full of lucid thought and elegant expression, must be ever deemed unworthy of its illustrious author. It would seem as if Bacon did not possess the political courage, requisite to enable a courtier to indite the annals of yet recent times.

ent gracefulness and glory, and certainly neither clipped nor fashioned for base private purposes. Of which of your sleek historical proprieties can the same be said?

But there are men in the world, who, provided you but give them moral *talk* enough, wherewith to rub over their sore consciences, can read without wincing any atrocity done and undenounced, and never ask, why not denounce it? These men tell us it is not the History of Machiavelli they condemn, but the shocking nakedness of his rules of princely action. . Aye, it is indeed the nakedness that offends them. The same principles are in Xenophon and Aristotle in a more cunning form, and in a hundred modern authorities,⁶⁹ with more or less of prudent clothing, and no one cries—*proh pudor!* Yet surely it is less criminal to write a minute history of the powers of poison, and the various uses whereunto it may be applied,⁷⁰—oneself neither using it nor even publishing its use, than to introduce it homœopathically into high-seasoned

⁶⁹ Chesterfield's Letters, Walpole's Correspondence, and the whole annals of British India are full of similar political ethics.

⁷⁰ "When some one remarked to him that he had shown princes how to become despotic, he replied,—I have shown princes the way to become tyrants, but I have at the same time shown the people how to get rid of tyrants."—Biog. Univ. xxvi. p. 52.

cookery, served up with all the show of genuine hospitality, and sanctified by words of grace.⁷¹ Many of the maxims in "the Prince" are, as far as words go, direct commands to falsehood and to fraud. Their aim must have either been, to lecture the head of the victorious rival party at Florence in the abstract principles of sin,—a somewhat incredible task, one would imagine, for an experienced statesman to set before him, in his declining days,—or they were the withering sarcasms of a keen and baffled spirit chafing vainly against the bars of its ill fortune.⁷²

The history of Florence, written probably in his latest years, is free at all events from these equivocal and unfortunate topics. As the most life-full picture of the turbulent populace and

⁷¹ It should not be forgotten that the too famous pamphlet entitled "The Prince" was never published till after his death.

⁷² For fourteen years he had filled the office of Secretary of State, with exemplary zeal and probity. When the administration of Soderini was overthrown, he was reduced to ruin and condemned to exile. A plot against the victorious Medici having been discovered, Machiavelli was seized upon suspicion and put to the torture. But his enemies could wring no saving syllable from his lips; he would criminate or accuse no one:—say, is it probable that this man would turn literary pander to his baffled conquerors? Nor does the generosity of Cardinal de Medici, afterwards Leo X. to which he was indebted for his subsequent release from prison, and employment once more in the service of the state, supply any ostensible motive of baseness on his part. It must be owned, however, that the age was a corrupt one; and amid the wreck of the popular freedom he had fallen in defending, he may like Phocion have waywardly cried "come" to despotism.

haughty nobles, of the greatest commonwealth of the middle ages, its value is inestimable. Every page trembles with the eddying whirl of that tumultuous time. The secret counsellings of the high-born,—their mutual jealousies and mistrusts,—their superb daring and self-confidence in action,—are vividly portrayed. And then the assemblies of the guilds, under their elective leaders, and their insurrectionary marchings, led by their *gonfalonieri*,—their parleys with unpopular power, and the finesse wherewith it momentarily appeased them;—and their dispersal, and its perfidy, and their resentful call again to arms;—and how men “of the people,” inspired by the emergency, would suddenly arise and rule the storm, when all other law and authority was forgotten; and how as the rage of the waters sank, these, each in turn, were stranded and forsaken,—all is there, intensely, magically full of the hot breath of passionate life.

It is for the sake of these things that I have spoken at such length to you of Machiavelli. Of his faults, and the evil principles his other works contain, in words if not in design, it is perhaps enough to say, that, if meant seriously, they are at war with every moral tie and sanction,—if

meant ironically, their misconception is a fearful warning how perilous an element is ridicule or *badinage*, even to those who deem themselves most thoroughly its masters.

“Hitherto historical literature in Europe is “but a barren field.”⁷³ ’Twas a long winter that of the middle ages; do not forget this, when you look at the first bough that blossomed, and put forth leaves on the return of spring. But ere the sixteenth century closed, how many⁷⁴ (comparatively speaking,—for a few are many where lately there were none,) healthful and vigorous stems were to be seen flinging their strong arms around; and who can tell from whose acorns these sprang? Who will rashly limit the enkindling power of the first flame? We find three truly “right honourable,” and (without irony) “most noble” names, entered in the book that Fame keeps for candidates for immortality, ere the close of the sixteenth century.⁷⁵ A hurried word of each of them.

⁷³ HALLAM:—Hist. Literature of Europe, from 1520—1550;—i. ix. 29.

⁷⁴ For a brief notice of Paruta, Bentivoglio, Herbert, and De Mezerai, see Biographical Index.

⁷⁵ Guicciardini finished his History of Italy in the autumn of 1534; Mariana published the first part of his History of Spain in 1592; and

Guicciardini came of an illustrious family at Florence. In early life he studied law; and he had filled the chair of jurisprudence in his native city, before he was called to the more active scenes of foreign diplomacy. For many years he was intrusted with important functions by the court of Rome; and he had acquired no small repute and influence as a statesman, when, to the regret of many, and the surprise probably of all who knew him, he resolved upon retiring from political employment, and devoting himself to the gratification of the desires, that long had secretly consumed him. From the quiet of his seclusion, however, he still kept a watchful eye on the administration of his country, and it is believed that he saved Alexander de Medici from many errors. On the assassination of that prince, the counsel of state would have proclaimed the ancient constitution, but for Guicciardini.⁷⁶ They all spoke vehemently of

in the preceding year, 1591, De Thou commenced the composition of his noble chronicle of France in his *Own Times*.

⁷⁶ Pignotti, relying on the accounts given by Segni and by Varchi, both historians of considerable eminence, would induce us to believe that the people wanted but a resolute leader, and that Guicciardini was actuated by base, though unsuccessful aims.—*Hist. of Tuscany*, iv. 6.—But the event is too eloquent a refutation of the former; and the latter, resting on vague imputation, has little weight with me.

seizing the opportunity for the resumption of their long lost privileges; they talked of freedom too, and of the spirit of the people. He alone remained mournful and unmoved. To him there seemed cause for nothing but deep apprehension, in a spasm of liberty like this. He knew the men and what they were *un*-equal to; he knew the people, and the price they were not prepared to pay for the franchises of their fathers. He saw that republican ideas existed not in the minds of the many, and he knew that no galvanism can make tame vassals have the pulse of dauntless men. This loud talk of high freedom over the fresh grave of a murdered master, passed with him for little more than the poor vaunt of slavery broken accidentally out of bounds.⁷⁷ Rising last to speak, he bid them rather strive to use the occasion for securing what immunities they still possessed, than in vainly affecting the restoration of those

⁷⁷ His thoughts were possibly not unlike those of Tacitus, when recording a similar moment in the last hours of Roman honour. "Finis Neronis ut lætus *primo gaudentium impetu* fuerat; * * * Patres læti, *usurpata statim libertate*, licentius, ut erga principem novum et absentem; pars populi integra et magnis domibus adnexa, clientes damnatorum et exsulum in spem erecti: *plebs sordida et circo ac theatris sueta*, aut qui adesis bonis, per dedecus Neronis alebantur, mæsti et rumorum avidi."—Hist. i. 4.

forms whose spirit had gone out from amongst them. The fatal evidence that he judged too truly, is found in the effect produced by his unpopular harangue. The heroic counsel declared their opinion changed; Cosmo de Medici, a young man but little known, was forthwith sent for, and within three days was peaceably proclaimed Lord of Florence.⁷⁸ Guicciardini then retired to his unambitious home, and could never after be induced to take any part in public affairs.

That Guicciardini's theoretical opinions led him to disbelieve in the practicability of popular government is unquestionable. But you will recollect that I am not speaking here as a political partizan. I wish to show you the great qualities of an eminent man, quite irrespective

⁷⁸ "It was when republican, independant Italy fell, that titles were introduced. As early as the year 1520, some persons remarked with disgust, that every one wanted to be called '*sir*;' a degeneracy of taste which was ascribed to foreign influence. About the year 1550, ponderous epithets of honour already encumbered and oppressed the simple address hitherto in use. Towards the end of the century the titles of '*duca*' and '*marchese*' became prevalent; every body wanted them; every body would be '*excellency*.' In other respects, also, society became stiffer and more exclusive: the gay ease of earlier manners, the simple frankness of mutual intercourse, were gone for ever."—RANKE: History of the Popes in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, iv. 9.—Cosmo de Medici subsequently obtained the title of Grand Duke of Tuscany, which his descendants still enjoy.

of his party leanings. If you sit down to read history only in quest of instances that suit your predilections, if your political principles cannot afford to allow merit—great merit—upright intention,—intellectual glory,—to those who have been arrayed against them,—take my advice and give such predilections to the winds. I would not have you harbour notions of the sort,—not for an hour ; they are pestilent, tyrannical, untrue : have a care of them. It is a chief good of the study of history, that it helps to cleanse your “ bosoms of that perilous stuff,” to which all earnest hearts are liable.

If the incident I have thus dwelt upon, gives us a clearer glimpse of the intuitive insight into men and things this singular man possessed, than any disquisition on his diplomatic services could do,—another anecdote may suffice to give us some idea of his power of impression. The courtiers of Charles V. once complained that whenever Guicciardini had audience, the emperor seemed wholly to forget that any one else was in waiting on him. “ No wonder,” said the most powerful monarch of his time,—“ for in a breath I can mould or fashion kingdoms, but in a hun-

dred years I could not make one Guicciardini.”⁷⁹ Such was the man who in the prime of life sat down to chronicle the events of his own time.

The voluminous history of De Thou is practically but little known. It is a sort of Mont Blanc in French literature, that every visitant feels bound to talk of, that reappears in some new aspect in almost every view, but whose cold and interminable paths few have actually trodden. De Thou lived in evil times,—times of religious fury and persecution,—times whose memory the wise adherents of neither side now seek to justify,—times full of cruelty, hypocrisy, and sin. That the mass on each side were thoroughly sincere is unquestionable; but how many of their princely ringleaders were so, may well be questioned. Montaigne, the keenest, and one of the very few impartial spectators of the scene, talking in private to De Thou of the King of Navarre and the Duke of Guise, told him that, from many opportunities of close observation, he was convinced “the zeal for religion they both made such a noise about, was a good pretence for enlisting adherents, but that neither

⁷⁹ Biog. Univ. xix. p. 72.

of them was seriously influenced by it ;” and both he was persuaded would change creeds, if political interest beckoned that way.⁸⁰ Sully himself confesses also, that “ in the popular idea of the day, if a man would be thought worthy of his professions of religion, perjury, cruelty, and dissimulation must be looked on as of no account in its behalf ;”⁸¹ and Davila does not blush to reprove Charles IX. and his fiend-mother, for “ imprudently desiring to win the praise of clemency and mercy,” by sparing the lives of two princes of the blood royal and some of their associates, on the eve of St. Bartholomew.⁸²

De Thou was in Paris on that fatal day, and its ghastly images seem to have never faded from his young and susceptible imagination.⁸³ His work, whose principal value is derived from its being the minutely detailed testimony of a living witness of the strife that led to that catastrophe, is deeply sorrow-laden. As a Catholic, he was said to lean too favourably towards the Huguenots ; “ as a statesman, he

⁸⁰ *Memoires de M. De Thou*, III.—*Coll. Univ. des Mem. Particuliers*, relatifs a l’histoire de France, tom. liii. p. 294.

⁸¹ *Memoirs of Sully*, v.

⁸² DAVILA ; *Hist. Civil Wars of France*, v. p. 182.

⁸³ *Memoires de De Thou*, p. 58.

showed himself equally removed from the extravagance of the rival parties, that rent France between them."⁸⁴ The design of chronicling the events of his day, appears to have early engaged him; and the singular opportunities his position gave him for amassing the requisite materials, were assiduously turned to account. He enjoyed the confidence not only of the sovereigns whom he served, but the friendship of their best advisers De Harlay and Sully. A varied succession of foreign and domestic employments rendered him acquainted with the leading men of his day, abroad as well as at home; nor is it perhaps to be accounted among the least of his advantages, that in his family there had been already formed a valuable collection of books.⁸⁵ His success as a historian seemed to be thus in every way insured.

But in addition to other causes, the fact of his history having been written in Latin, sufficiently accounts for its want of popularity. No translation could repair this fundamental fault. You may make casts in plaster, which preserve not only the expression but the minute elegancies of the chisel; but what if the statue itself be

⁸⁴ DUPLESSIS; dans la Biog. Univ. xlv. p. 501, &c.

⁸⁵ Idem.

cramped and natureless and cold? What rendering can make it natural? What embalming care can give the look of life? When Latin was a living, idiom-rife, passion-stuttered, blood-stirring tongue,—demagogues could harangue, and comedians joke, and annalists do better than either in it; and we, by scrutinous study, come to learn wherein a portion of its vividness consisted, and, in what we call translations, strive to shadow forth its likeness.

But only think how few writers of any nation have mastered their mother tongue, so as to be worth studying for their style's sake. There is no trace of a second Tacitus, among the most ambitious and one of the most literary nations of antiquity: what a notion then to expect that, what seemed so illustriously difficult while the dialect was yet pure and plastic, could be accomplished by a lexicon-taught foreigner, a thousand years after it had died!

The whole matter comes in short to this: eloquence,—or the power of impression by speech, must be intensely natural, or must seem so; and it is quite hard enough to think aloud eloquently in one's own tongue: but to think eloquently in a foreign, and more especially a dead or merely

written language, is I imagine next to impossible. Pretty things have, after due cogitation, been let off in Latin ; here and there a fine turn of expression may be achieved ; but you don't know the illrequited pains and time these cost,—such as no earnest man, thinking hard about his subject matter, and that a great and worthy subject matter, can afford to give. De Thou was undoubtedly an earnest man. The idea of his life, as he himself expressed it, was to “compose a history, whose precepts and examples might form a rule of life, and tend to make it happy.”⁸⁶ If he failed to realize this truly noble aim, he has at all events left behind him a greater mass of valuable information touching the annals of France, than any man before or since has succeeded in acquiring.⁸⁶

The greatest of Spanish historians, Mariana, had nearly in like manner turned the key upon himself. More fortunate, however, than his French cotemporary, he re-wrote his history in his native tongue ; and the numerous editions which have from time to time appeared in Spain,

⁸⁶ Biog. Univ. xlv. p. 506.

⁸⁷ See preface to Anquetil's “Spirit of the League,” and indeed all the modern French works on the 16th and 17th centuries.

sufficiently attest its enduring power and eloquence. His aim would seem to have been to show his country to itself in time's perspective,—to do for Spain, what Livy did for Rome. The current of his narrative, like the noble stream by whose margin he had strayed in thoughtful youth,⁸⁸ and to which he retired from the applause of Rome and Paris, is rather smooth and rapid, than very clear or very deep. The onward current seldom pauses to expand beyond its ordinary bounds; there are few striking images or profound reflections,—few graphic scenes elaborately pictured. But the effect of the entire is, for that very reason probably, the more impressive; and calling to mind the temper of the nation to whom it was addressed, and its comparative paucity of romantic episodes, or images set up for hero-worship, the merit justly due to Mariana cannot easily be exaggerated. Spain was, in his day, reeling from the intoxication produced by the mingled spirit of chivalry⁸⁹ and of empire. It was the very noon of Spanish pride—pride of bravery by land and

⁸⁸ He was born in Talavera in 1537; at the age of 17 he entered the order of Jesuits, and in 1574 gave himself up wholly to study, in their college at Toledo.

⁸⁹ See RANKE's *History of the Popes*, ii. 1, § 4.

sea,—pride of conquest and acquisition in every quarter of the world—pride of opulence and art and arms. The Mahometan power, though long broken in the peninsula, still menaced southern christendom,⁹⁰ and contributed to keep alive the crusading spirit of the aristocracy; the people saw more than fable's wonders realized by the adventurers in both Indies; and the hereditary wars in which the nation was engaged with France, tended also to maintain the incessant palpitation for personal distinction and adventure, which was the pulse of chivalric life.

Mariana did not think it necessary to war with these prevalent ideas; on the contrary, his narrative is a never ending pageant of warriors and captives, solemnities and struggles. But the result of all is to bring out in true *chiaro-scuro* the form of a great nation, and to leave that form permanently impressed in all its grave essential characteristics on the memory.

There was a time when Mariana's name was a familiar knell of controversy in half the countries of Europe;⁹¹ with the merits or demerits of his writings on politico-religious questions we have

⁹⁰ CANTEMIR: Hist. Othmans, v. iii:—Suppl. to Mariana, &c.

nothing here to do; but I should deem it a breach of trust towards you if I did not warn you, that even his history is deeply tainted with the intolerance which was the sin of the age he lived in, and I am bound to say to you of him, as I shall with equal freedom tell you of many who have written upon the opposite side,—believe him not. With sorrow I am forced⁹¹ to own that I hardly know one history of the Reformation or its times, which I have not found lamentably wanting in generous spirit and common justice. And I am equally bound to bid you be upon your guard, while reading all national histories relative to that time. I don't blame the men for having strong leanings and attachments; I am sure that without the energy of character that necessarily begets such predilections, the higher powers of historic composition cannot exist. Neither do I believe that in all cases, they wilfully suppressed, falsified, or distorted the events of their unforgiving and

⁹¹ “That which has made most noise in the world is his book, *De Rege et Regis institutione*; for some years since there was scarce a cobbler though he knew not so much as the title of the work, but quoted Mariana's treasonable doctrines,” &c. It was suppressed both at Rome and Paris, as containing “propositions destructive to kings.”—Stephen's Preface to English translation of the Hist. of Spain, 1699.

implacable time, or that they were influenced by mean or selfish motives. I do not think so ill of human nature. But I hardly doubt that any fairminded man can compare, and sift, and weigh, and diligently strive to know for certain the actual circumstances of the religious conflicts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, without perceiving that neither Mariana, nor Buchanan, nor any other man of eminence has told us the *whole* truth and *nothing* but the truth.

The same eventful period that occupied the attention of De Thou, engaged the subtler mind of Davila. He also possessed singularly favourable opportunities of appreciating the events that were passing around him ; and it is the just, and, all things considered, extraordinary proof of the utility and faithfulness of both, that in the main their rival narratives of fact agree. Yet never did any two men set about the same task, with views and dispositions more dissimilar. Davila was an Italian, and wrote *con furore* in his own beautiful tongue, the historic vindication,

⁹² Mariana did not hesitate to publish a pamphlet on the alteration in the currency by Philip III. which drew down upon him the vengeance of that tyrant.—Biog. Univ. xxvii. p. 44. I have never been able to get a peep at this Spanish “Drapier’s Letters.”

as he undoubtedly intended it to be, of his countrywoman Catherine de Medici,⁹³ and the party of which she was the soul in France. He enters into every plot and *coup d'état* of that restless era, with all the active sympathy of a partizan. The fearful scene is enacted not so much before your eyes upon a stage, as around and about you,—half behind your back, half at your very ear. You are in the midst of the *meleè*. The conference is held in the adjoining room, with the door ajar; Leaguers and Courtiers lie solemnly to each others' faces, and part in plighted faith never meant to be observed; but the perfidy is not avowed until—the instant they are out of each other's sight. Through the streets of the beleaguered city rises the hunger-cry of "Bread, or Peace:" at first the murmurers are hanged for mutiny; then they grow too numerous; and see, the scaling ladders are planted against the walls! You are hustled

⁹³ Clement VII. was reported to have said, upon hearing of the marriage of Catherine with Prince Henry,—“that he foresaw a mighty conflagration would be one day kindled in France by that firebrand, as he called his cousin.”—This passage was published in the first edition of De Thou's history, but omitted in subsequent editions.—See Appendix to Wilson's English translation, 2 vols. fol.: London, 1730.

by the crowd ; you are borne along with them ; —by and bye there is an armed truce, and the long wounded country smiles in the catholic sunshine once again, and “ God’s rain descends upon the evil and the good,—upon the just and the unjust,” as of yore.

In every moral aspect Davila is the inferior of De Thou. “ As a foreign expectant of the court to which he had luckily attached himself, he appears to have flung himself heart and soul into the current of the place and time. It was a time when the courtiers of France, influenced by the example of the queen, reduced everything to finesse. They could not believe that a great man or a minister could ever speak as he really thought, or act naturally. They saw in everything some mystery, or stratagem, or *ruse* ; and this they called political skill. Davila recounts nothing for which he has not three or four alternative reasons to give ; and the more complicated the affair, and the more craft and intrigue it calls forth, the greater delight does it seem to afford him. In a good courtier he treats anything as lawful that is prompted by the royal will ; and if he fails to justify certain enormities,

it is not from any doubt that the plea of necessity is all-ample."⁹³

But whatever his inferiority to De Thou in moral dignity and worth, it is impossible to deny his superiority as an artist. For one who has tried to read the former, fifty have been fascinated with the latter; and those who have studied both, find it nearly as difficult to forget the picture of Davila, as to remember the maps of De Thou.

One hardly can believe his eyes in reading Davila's calm and circumstantial narrative of the assassination of the Duke of Guise. We have the long brooding plot of royalty divulged to its confidants, debated in cold blood in the cabinet, and finally determined on. The palace is agreed upon as most convenient for the deed,—a message from the king himself the safest signal,—the door of his private chamber the most fitting spot.⁹⁴ The ties of kindred, the rights of hospitality, the words of honour are alike forgotten. The head of the House of Lorraine falls, pierced with a hundred wounds; in a few hours afterwards, his brother shares a similar fate; the

⁹³ ANQUETIL, pref. *Spirit of the League*, p. 63.

⁹⁴ *Hist. of Civil Wars of France*, ix.

royal murderer orders their bodies to be buried in quicklime, in some unknown place, "removing thus," says the historian, "those tragical objects which work strange emotions in the vulgar sort."⁹⁵ But not a breath of reprehension has Davila to bestow upon the matter. King Henry calls it "just and indispensable;" and the bed-ridden Catherine, who was not privy to the plot, when told of the fate of her relative, utters not a word of feminine pity or abhorrence, but characteristically asks her son, "has he prepared against the consequences?"⁹⁶

Let us nevertheless beware how we visit the Italian annalist with disproportionate and partial censure. He was a protégé, a diplomatist, a contemporary; pray, turn to your most familiar handbooks of modern history, and see how they speak of the transaction. Hume talks of it as "*an execution, which the necessity of it alone could excuse!*"⁹⁷ Necessity, forsooth; I should be exceedingly glad to know what perfidy, cruelty, or barbarity, may not be defended as right and pure,

⁹⁵ "Rimovenda a questo modo quelle tragedie, che appresso la plebe sogliono cagionare gravissimi e subitosi motivi."—DAVILA, ix.

⁹⁶ "Avete voi preseduti i mali che sono per succedere? Provvidetevi diligentemente."

⁹⁷ HUME, Hist. England, xl. 3.

if such a principle as this be once admitted, or if all distinctions between cowardly assassination and public justice be thus philosophically obliterated in the language of popular historians?⁹⁸ Robertson talks of Henry III. as reduced by the party of which Guise was chief, to a position that rendered it absolutely necessary for him, "by a sudden and daring blow, to cut off his formidable rival;" and he then muffles the revolting truth in the brief intimation, that "before the year 1588 expired, he (Guise) fell a victim to the resentment and fear of Henry, and to his own security."⁹⁹

Davila belongs to the seventeenth century; so also does Clarendon, a name never to be mentioned without deep respect. Before his beautiful narrative appeared, English history,—in its high and lofty characteristics,—was not. Milton wrote a history; so did Lord Herbert of Cherbury; so did Bacon; but it is perhaps enough to say of each of them, that their minds were preoccupied with other things, and that for all the effect these productions of theirs have had, they might almost

⁹⁸ The terms in which Lingard alludes to the transaction are cold, as usual; but they are neither immoral nor untrue.

⁹⁹ ROBERTSON: *Hist. Scotland*, vii.

as well have never been composed. But Clarendon had both the natural caste of mind, and the practical education of a great historian.¹⁰⁰ I have no idea that a mere *litterateur*—no matter what his industry, power of language, or force of sympathy,—can write history well. Look back at the illustrious names we have been recalling—are they not all, with hardly an exception, men of action, men of the world, men of great, and for the most part, of sorrowful experience? No chimney-corner politicians these; no irresponsible speculators upon human fate; no dryshod pilots of time's life-boat:—but chiefly weather-beaten men, whose hairs grew early grey. The critics staid at home and quibbled; these men were at their manly post, so long as duty needed; when they came back, they wrote, “even as they were moved,” they knew not how or why, save that they thought the things they had witnessed were memorable;—and lo! they have been remembered. And why is it that so many others have been so soon forgotten? Not so much, I do believe, from any literary incompetence or blundering in the mechanical construction of their works,

¹⁰⁰ LISTER's life of Clarendon is one of best additions that has of late years been made to the store of English biography.

as because they sat down to recite rather what others had said before them, than to set forth either new facts, or new aspects of old facts. Surely the poor old world, which we young folk in these fine gas-lit days of ours, are apt to call a very ignorant and unenlightened world,—and which indeed in some respects must still, I fear, suffer the reproach of ill-education for many a day to come,—has shown itself a wise and most discerning world, in listening rather inattentively, and often not at all, to learned worthies talking historically at great length, who really have had nothing to say.

Clarendon had much to say. He was one of the most influential men of his generation ; and having outstood “the whips and scorns of time” right manfully, lived to enjoy the thorough triumph of his principles, and to give us the benefit of his fifty years experience. My friends, this is the sort of man we want to get acquainted with. At the hazard of tautology I must repeat, what I have already more than once observed to you, —it is of comparatively no importance what party notions such a man as Clarendon entertained. He had the head of a great man, and I

do believe the heart of a just man.¹⁰¹ I am not used to swear by him ; in very many opinions, I consider him wholly astray : but what of that ? He can do for me what no other man whatsoever can,—put me, as by enchantment's spell, back into the midst of that Puritan springtide, which for a season washed over all the bulwarks of English church and crown, and then subsided muddily again, leaving the old landmarks much as they were, till another storm arose and permanently changed them. The great thing for me is—not, whether Hyde should have joined the royalists at the time he did, or whether he might not have further reined in the perfidious vengeance of the Restoration, but—to see the royalist camp as it lay dissolute and confident,—and the long winded parliament as it sat in solemn cabal,—and to feel that if stammering Oliver, or

¹⁰¹ There is a curious letter, dated 18th April, 1663, from Clarendon, then Prime minister, to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, respecting the conduct of the Court of Claims, then sitting for the settlement of estates confiscated during the civil war. He thinks it necessary to begin by protesting that no man can be "more solicitous to establish Ireland upon a true English interest ; but" he adds, "there is as much need of moderation and justice in composing that establishment, as was ever necessary in any affair of this world ; and the world will be more apt to suspect us of tyranny than indulgence towards the Irish." He vehemently upbraids the directions suggested for the guidance of the commissioners, by the English parliament ;

headlong Rupert, or the noble-hearted Vane were now to walk the earth again, I should know and recognise them ; this, as I take it, is the good of having a “ History of the Great Rebellion,” written by a man of wisdom and genius.

The eighteenth century now opens on our view, with its crowd of French, German, Scotch, and English writers. It were futile to attempt any thing in the shape of criticism on such a host. It was the insuperable difficulty of dealing with this portion of my subject, in the manner I have hitherto adopted, that first suggested the form of a Biographical Index to Historians, which will be found at the end of this volume, and to which I must generally refer. I am painfully conscious how meagre and lifeless such a resource must be. But what can one do ? Incidentally I have had occasion to allude to Hume, Robertson, Voltaire, Raynal, and others ; of Gibbon and

and urges that as “ the king had *graciously* admitted evidence to “ be heard” on behalf of the attainted, “ they should be *justly* dealt “ with.” He remonstrates against “ rejecting *all* Irish evidence because “ it is Irish, when no other can naturally be expected in that affair ;”— he reminds Lord Anglesea that treason was the sin alike of all three kingdoms, “ though the dismal effect and judgment of it falls only upon “ poor Ireland ; but since they are still to be preserved a nation, such a “ temper should be exercised towards them, at least in the administra- “ tion of justice, that they should undergo no disadvantage or reproach “ only for being Irish.”—State Papers, fol. iii.—Supplement 36.

of the Spanish historians of America, I shall find an opportunity to speak hereafter.¹⁰² I can only add my humble tribute of praise and obligation here, to Burnet for his gossiping chronicle of "His Own Times," which, in spite of all the abuse and ridicule¹⁰³ it has been exposed to, has continued, and I am persuaded will continue to be, one of the most popular books in the English language;—to Mascou, to Pfeffel, and to Schiller, for their valuable additions to German annals,—to Watson, the historian of Philip II. and III.—to the elder Müller for his celebrated history of Switzerland,—to Vertot, Daniel, Millot, and Anquetil, for their meritorious contributions to French literature—to Giannioni for his account of Naples, and

¹⁰² See Lectures V. and VI.

¹⁰³ The boiling hatred which, on party grounds, Swift bore the Whig bishop, is most amusingly evinced in the marginal notes, that were found in the Dean's copy of the history. One of them is at once so just a criticism on the great fault of the book, and so genuine a specimen of Irish humour, that I cannot help quoting it. Burnet, whose self-importance sought historic fame for every public transaction wherewith he or his connections were however obscurely concerned, begins an account of certain negotiations between his countrymen and the fugitive Charles II. thus,—“upon the king's (Charles I.) death, the Scots proclaimed his son king, and sent over Sir G. Wineam, that married my great-aunt, to treat with him, &c.” Swift wrote opposite the paragraph,—“Was that the reason he was sent?”—Oxford Edition of Burnet's History of his own times, with the pencil notes of Dartmouth, Swift, Hardwicke, and Onslow, vol. i. p. 88.

Muratori for his great work, the *Annals of Modern Italy*.

Finally, there are the historians of our own era, worthy both in number and repute of our best attention and regard. The fate of cotemporaries seems, in the higher walks of art, too often to resemble that of the Prophets, who are doomed to live without due honour in their own country. Reverence is slow of growth ; no artificial heat of popularity will quicken it : and reverence is the historian's great reward. Number of copies sold,—importunate “calls of the trade” for fresh editions,—highly favourable notices in the leading journals of the day,—however flattering and lucrative signals of success, are not the deep, fond, yearning heart's requital. He who talks slightly of such proofs of popularity is certainly a very weak, and probably a very insincere man ; but he to whom they are the quarried stores whereof he hopes to build a lasting monument, is a man destined to have no lasting monument,—a man sooner or later sure to be forgotten. If tests like these are anything, Smollett must take rank before Hume, and Mitford before Mill ; though there can be little doubt that the former are among the worst, and

the latter among the most distinguished, historians that we have. But the writings of the former *took* at the time they were published, and those of the latter did not : let us keep this in remembrance when judging of living authors.

Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, a vast improvement has taken place in French historic composition. The habit of pamphleteering in the dialect of history, so long inveterate in France, has been to a great degree broken down, not by remonstrance merely, but by example. Barante, Daru, Thierry, St. Aulaire, Michelet, and Thiers picture forth with consummate skill, the scenes which Dubos, Boulainvilliers, and Henault would have despatched in a series of party epigrams. There are still the philosophical writers—Sismondi and Guizot, fit to vie with the best of former days ; but the tone of all is essentially different, from that of the flashy and fanatic arrogance of the last century. Low philosophy is getting out of vogue, and a high feeling of art is daily more perceptible.

Niebuhr's history of Rome, unfinished though it be, is one of those many great monuments of genius, whereof Germany may well be proud. Its effect on modern ideas of antiquity has

already been incalculable. It has set a world of stagnant thought in motion, and struck new light into its darkest depths. What matter if its form be somewhat rugged and unfashionable; there is life,—the actual, rude, hungry, popular life of ancient Rome—in it: where had we anything of the sort before? It is rough undeniably; but let us take what we have got, and be very thankful. Truths hewn in granite are inestimably preferable to the smoothest lies in alabaster.

A still more recent work of a very high order has been lately brought within our reach,—the history of the Popes of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by Ranke.¹⁰⁶ There may be errors and partialities discoverable in the perilous narrative,—unavoidably perilous to a Protestant writing Catholic history. But I believe no candid man will rise from the perusal of this admirable work, without the conviction that

¹⁰⁶ Leopold Ranke is professor of History in the University of Berlin. This may appear strange to some; but it is not singular in Germany, to give the teaching of history to men who have made it their study, and who have proved themselves capable of adding to its store. The Germans wish to have history studied, and they take the proper way of teaching it. Elsewhere it is deemed desirable that its truth should not be disseminated, and means equally well calculated to attain the object are pursued. Mrs. Austin, to whom the English reader is indebted for the "History of the Popes," has since translated Ranke's "History of the Reformation in Germany."

Ranke is a thoroughly honest and pure-hearted writer. It is the glorious triumph of the book, that the author having told you in the outset what his own religious feelings are, attempts to make no historic case for his particular creed. He does hearty justice to the good men of both sides, and wastes not a syllable in extenuating the failings of his own. I think the highest praise I can give Ranke is, that I have never heard a bigot of either side speak well of him.

England has improved nearly as much as France, from her literary intercourse with Germany in the last fifty years. If Thirlwall stood alone, this were evident. To call his history of Greece the best we have is nothing; it is one of the best books on any subject in the language. Let me name with every honour likewise,—Mill's *British Empire in India*,—Palgrave's, Turner's, and Lord Mahon's excellent writings,—and Arnold's *Rome*, unfortunately left unfinished. The works of Lingard, Mackintosh, Milman, Lord John Russell, Hallam, Forster, and Macaulay, are also of very great value.

The Scotch have, since George Buchanan's time, wrought with much industry and no ordinary success in the historic field; and they seem

to have no mind to desert it now. Brodie's Commonwealth, and Alison's French Revolution are, on opposite sides, excellent memorials of the mighty conflicts of political principles. The work of Mr. Tytler, lately brought to its conclusion, is one of the most valuable contributions Scotland has ever made to the annalist's library. In saying this, I should be sorry to appear to underrate another and still more remarkable writer—Thomas Carlyle, with whose dazzling epos of the "French Revolution," every one ought to be acquainted. But I regard that as belonging to a wholly different class, if indeed it does not in itself constitute a class, to be judged by rules altogether different from those which are applicable to ordinary productions.

America also demands a hearing. She will have representatives of her own in the sanhedrim of time; none else shall tell her story any longer. Her literature, like her institutions, prepares to spring into the field full-grown and armed, and skilled in all the wisdom of the ancients. There were innumerable difficulties and disheartening prejudices hitherto in the way; and domineering Europe dreamed they were insuperable. Bancroft has cleared them at a

bound. Already they are passing into forgetfulness ; soon it will be hard to understand them. His charming "history of the Colonization of the United States," which brings us down nearly to the end of American tutelage, is now complete. In the language of a brief notice appended to the concluding volume, he pauses to "hear from the favouring opinion of the people, the summons to go forward and write the history of the American Revolution."¹⁰⁷ Let him not hesitate. More than America looks with grateful expectation. Morally there is no Atlantic ocean now ! Different in opinions and in style are the works of Prescott, who also well merits the popularity he has attained in Europe as well as in America.

The cold chain of Ireland's silence too has in these latter days been broken. The name of Moore needs no eulogy from me. Indeed he has reigned so long autocratically in our literary affections, that one cannot help feeling peculiar pleasure in being able at length to point to other names of eminent worth as historians, in whose fame we may take pride as fellow-countrymen.

¹⁰⁷ Dated Boston, 20, Nov. 1840, vol. iii. p. 469.—The Lecture, of which the substance is here given, was delivered 30, March, 1841.

We may claim, I believe, the late Mr. Wallis, the continuator of Sir J. Mackintosh's History of England, Croll, Taylor, Crowe, and above all—Napier, the author of the "History of the Peninsular War,"—one of the ablest military histories in existence. Assuredly it is time for us to begin to understand the use and study of history!

IV.

HOW TO READ HISTORY?

“Wisdom is a nut, which, unless, you choose with judgment, may cost you a tooth, and pay you with nothing but a worm.”

SWIFT.

It is usual to put forward, as one of the inducements to the reading of history, that it is really very good amusement,—a cheap way of pleasantly passing the time, if people had only the taste for it. I cannot consent to chime in with any such jingle. If nothing better than this can be said for it, we may as well let the subject alone. Good history is indeed most animating—inimitably well calculated to occupy without wearying, to please highly without fatiguing,—a well constituted mind. But a well constituted mind will not need to be told, that what is instructive is agreeable.

A silly mother tells her child, that plain bread is far more delicious than unsound fruit, and the child does not like it one bit the better for the

falsehood. The infant mind is feeble and un-reasoning, and it is ruled by the momentary impulse of its palate. But the man of ordinary sense is thankful to get what will do him good,—is grateful to any one who will tell him what is best for him. He will abstain from what is deleterious, and take what is salutary, without your telling him lies about it; nay, nothing makes him hesitate about it, except the swindling folly, that would label Rochelle salts “white sugar candy.”

Now history is not distasteful, far otherwise. It is wholesome generous food, fit for the strong man, *not* fit for babes, or fops, or yawning idlers;—not capable of being relished or digested by them, though you made affidavits of its sweetness and lightness;—not capable of being invested with any higher relish, to the taste of the healthy and hungry man, by any lying nick-names.

History is nutritious solid food. You must have a hunger for it, and a taste for it, before you can receive or enjoy it. If you are used to living on intellectual ratafia and lemonade, you cannot read history. It wont do to take it for confectionary. It is not confectionary, and the lie

cheats nobody. If you have not the taste for aliment of this kind, if you have no wish for it, or feeling that you want it, it is idle to force you. Get the appetite for such food, and *then*,—then you will laugh at the notion of its being served up to you as confectionary, and you will say to the fellow who so trifles with you, Sir, you insult my understanding, you mistake me for a lounge—for one of those useless incumbrances upon society, who go about looking for something to *amuse* them.

“Amusement,” indeed? Was man made to spend his life looking for amusement? Amusement is a needful and excellent thing,—quite as necessary for every man’s bodily and mental health, as work or study. Nothing grieves me daily more, than to see how straightened and forgotten in this essential want, are the mass of the people. I think popular amusements thoroughly essential to a well ordered state of society. I am satisfied that it is a great moral duty of the state, to afford every means of innocent and healthful relaxation to the people; and I hope that we shall all live to see the day, when that long neglected duty shall be forced upon the government of this country.

But amusement should be called amusement, and study and instruction should be called food. I am as fond—indeed I believe fonder of history—than many of my acquaintance. I am a sort of *gourmand* of history. It takes a large dish to quell my zest; and as for a new historical book, I take infinite delight in having to cut open its damp leaves, and with difficulty let it go until I finish it. But I do not think it tastes like a fashionable novel, or a comical trial in a newspaper. These, too, I can read for the fun that is in them, when in the humour. Fun is a capital thing. A man that cannot enjoy a joke,—or that never gives himself a day's holiday to ramble over the green hills,—or that never affords himself leisure to take his wife or his sister to the play, is a dolt not worth his diet: I would not trust that fellow, though he had the look of a judge, and the talk of a professor. At all events, such a being would have no chance of doing any great harm by the contagion of his example, or by the weight of his influence in Ireland; for whatever else be our shortcomings, an Irishman never yet gave much heed or confidency to any one, who was not ready to enjoy, and willing to contribute to the common stock of social

mirth, that keeps our national patience from dying out, amid trials and misfortunes.

Have your amusement, then,—say I, and more of it to you, and better joy in it, and heartier laughs out of it,—every day you live. But there is no humour in making fools of ourselves. There is no wit in solemn nonsense; there is no good in telling lies: and calling things by their wrong names is assuredly one of the worst kinds of falsehood. Bacon has a beautiful thought near akin to this matter. When speaking of those foolish defenders of the doctrine of a superintending Providence, who are ever ready to interpret each signal coincidence of circumstances, into a special interposition of Almighty power, he says,—“this is mere imposture as t’were in
“favour of God, and nothing else but to offer
“unto the Author of all Truth, the unclean
“sacrifice of a lie.”¹ And so too of history. History is not fitted to stuff a yawning gap in your time, or to be taken up for want of something else to do—to be winked and nodded over. If you are sleepy—“get thee to bed.” If you are merry, laugh with a friend if he is

¹ Advancement of Learning: vol. ii: p. 13. Montagu’s edition.

near you; and if he is out of the way, put your feet on the fender, look into the fire, and think what a comical world it is. But do *not* read history, when you are not fit to read it *to any good purpose*. It is very much better not to eat at all, than to eat what you cannot digest. And of all intellectual food that I know of, history is that which requires most digestion.

But I hear some intellectual economist cry,—what shocking waste of time! Think how short life is; think how much is to be read; put down upon paper the number of volumes in a good historical library, and the number of these you could read at so many hours a day; tot them up at the end of the year, and then see whether you ought to waste an instant.

Waste?—a fiddlestick! What do you read for? Is it for the sake of having it to say that you have read? Swift says that literary fops are like pretenders to fashion, “they treat books as the others do lords, learn their titles exactly, and then brag of their acquaintance.”² I trust you have better thoughts. You wish to read histories for their own sake. You do not

² Works: vol. iii, p. 75.

want to have it *to say* how many. You are not—nor ought you ever to be ashamed of confessing how few. The best men of my acquaintance are not those who have *gone through*, as it is called, the greatest number of books. I will admit that a man anxious to know the growth of his own mind, would do well to note down the books he reads in the year. So far the economist and I agree. But I object to the totting up of the volumes read. I wholly object to the notion that the moral to be drawn by a moral creature, from such a self-confession of his reading, is in any sense a matter of amount. It is *what sort* of sustenance he has been giving his spirit, during that time, not its variety or quantum, that is the question—aye, trust me, the whole question. Ideas are the food of your soul; foul and polluted ideas are poisonous food; manly, and national, and religious ideas are invigorating food. But these are not measurable by pages or volumes. They cannot be estimated thus. One page of Tacitus, or Herodotus, Bancroft, or Napier, contains more thinking stuff,—more of the winnowed corn of experience,—than all Rapin and Echard put together.

A young friend of mine once came to me and

said, "will you advise me what books to take with me out of town : I am going to Conemara to spend the summer ; I won't be back for three months, or more ; and you know my love of books, and how fast I read ; so give me a long list if you love me." " I do know your habits," said I, " and I do love you ; but as for a long list, that I could not conscientiously be an accomplice in. You are going to one of the finest countries in the world—to one of the richest in beauty, and one of the most interesting in the simple and pure character of its people. Take very few books with you. As the climate is *rather* damp, a resource at an inn when weather-bound, is all very well. But don't go spancelled to walk those glorious hills. Read the mountains, boy !—read the gushing streams ;—read the inspired and inspiring language of the troubled and fitful sky ;—above all—read the people ;—a people full of traditions,—having a legend to tell of every *rhah*,³ and the thread of a local romance ready spun round every crumbling ruin ;—a people possessed with an instinctive love for

³ The mispronunciation of this Irish phrase by reason of its Anglicised orthography (rath) forces me to endeavour (I am aware but imperfectly) to break the *spell*.

country and for religion, and not without ways of their own for marking time's footsteps in both ;— a people who, when they embraced Christianity, thought it would be ungrateful to banish the gay and fantastic forms they had honoured in earlier days ;⁴—a people whose eye and lip still seem to say—the national heart is not broken yet ! Listen to them ; look in their faces ; learn their stories ;—these—these are a living literature, poetry, history, knowledge of man—transcendantly better than all you can gather from a stereotyped load in your portmanteau. Books are but cups-full of the stream ; can all the cups in the world contain the stream, or give you the freshness, the nature, the life, whence (or whence like) they are filled ? What is history, or the use of it, but a help to the knowledge of man ? Never forget the end in the means : never forget that one idea you work out for yourself, is worth a million notions you acquire at second hand.”

Well, but cries the economist, are people to be idle ? I will answer this, as our own glorious Sheridan answered it many years ago. “ Lord Chesterfield,” said he, “ writing to his son, tells

⁴ TOLAND : History of the Druids ; &c.

him to hurry from pleasure to work, and from business to pleasure, so that he should "never be doing nothing : I say," adds Sheridan, "frequently be unemployed ; sit and think : for the mind of a wise man is formed more by the action of his own thoughts, than by continually cramming it."⁵

The habit of reflection and thought is precisely that in which, as a people, I think we are most deficient : let us try to correct this. My notion is that the working man especially needs books, to give him useful and happy topics to think of ; and history being one of the most healthful, instructive, and withal most agreeable topics for thinking, I wish to warn you against the cramming system. It is not the quantity you read, but the quality of what you read, and the good it is likely to do you, that is to be considered.

Think, as you read, and read that you may think : otherwise you can derive no real benefit from history.

It follows from all this, that books of history which do not set you thinking, are just the sort of books that you need not mind reading. If

⁵ MOORE : Life of Sheridan, vol. 1, p. 135.

you be fit to read history, you are ready and willing to read it with your minds, as well as with your eyes. Any book will employ your eyes; but there is not such a very great number, that will give any useful employment to your heads and hearts; and the generality can give no employment of that sort whatever. Now I want you to read with your minds as well as your eyes. You may wear out those much-worked eyes of yours, and yet all to little purpose. Pray, give your brains a little more to do, and your eyes a little less.

Somebody once, in lecturing a man beforehand how to qualify himself as a debater in the House of Commons, laid down this as the first rule for obtaining character there,—“whenever you have nothing to say—say it.” There is deep meaning in this. A cackler is always saying a little; nay, when he has in fact nothing to say, he doesn’t know it, and starts to his feet to try and give forth something, which something is not in him. So it is with history; when you have not a good history, you have none; remember you have none to read, and do not weary your faithful and diligent eyes to no purpose.

Dr. Johnson has said, that “there is a great

difference between places worth seeing, and places worth going to see." In like manner there are many books worth having, but not near so many worth spending one's money upon. Charles Lamb says, "I can read anything which I call a *book*. There are things in that shape which I cannot allow for such. In this catalogue of *books which are no books*—I reckon Court Calendars, Directories, Almanacs, Statutes at large, Beattie, Soame Jenyns, Paley's Moral Philosophy, and generally all those volumes which no gentleman's library should be without."⁶ Historians may be divided into those that are worth having, at almost any price; and those that are hardly worth having, although you got them for nothing. I know of hardly any middle class. If a book be a real book, if there dwell in it bodily a soul, if it can speak,—hath ideas, notions of its own, not mere parrot-talk of another's imagining—such a book is worth any price; it is a real friend; a man is more a man for having such a book; it is well for him that he hath it.

On the other hand, if a book, whether history or of any other kind, hath no individuality in it,

⁶ Elia: Second Series: p. 45: On books and reading.

I think it is on the whole as well to let it lie on the bookseller's shelf. You may get it for a shilling ; it may be well printed—nicely got up, as they say. Still I say it is too dear. What is it good for ? Simply nothing. It cannot soften, it cannot warm, it cannot nerve, it cannot brace you ; what can it do for you ? Nothing, friend. Much better keep your shilling in your pocket till it gets another beside it, and then buy an older edition of a book that is a book, even though it be a little out at elbows. Of making many books, and of buying many books, there is no end. Curran, one of the most gifted men of our fathers' day, said once that " his books were few." Indeed I think the reading of many books, unless specially well chosen, is a most pernicious habit. Reading must often be, after a man comes to the age when he can work for himself, a rare luxury. Would to God it were within the reach of every man in this land. My friends, it shall yet be so. A people cannot be as they ought to be until it is so. I hope I shall not die, until I see every town and every village with its lending library accessible to the working man. It is something to have it within these walls, where the rats and

the mice held their gambols a few years ago.⁷ We don't exclude *natural* history; but we protest against its having it all its own way. We saw no reason then, why we should not convert this noble building into a home of knowledge and popular instruction; I see no reason now, why we should not have similar homes of knowledge in every town in the kingdom. Why should it not be done?

No man has time to read dead books. The living ones are quite as much as any industrious man can get through, in the course of an ordinary life. The proper business of human life is action;—to do; to be something; to discharge our social, and political, and religious duties, (if indeed these are distinguishable;) to work with men, upon men, for the ordinary wants of existence, and the furtherance of good. Reading is not the business of life; nor should it be allowed to occupy an undue share. Ploughing is not the end or aim of agriculture, only the means. For if a man read living books, he must take time to think about them, else he might as

⁷ The edifice that was formerly (and is still called) the Royal Exchange of Dublin.

well be asleep. The mind of man is a sword, fashioned to cut a way for itself in life; and reading is one of those whetstones whereon the blade is set. Would ye grind on for ever to find an edge? Of a truth, the whole substance of the weapon that was designed for use, would be worn out in the sharpening.

I am so strongly impressed with the value of time to every man, and with the idleness of ill-conducted, desultory, scrambling reading, that I have devoted an entire section of this course to the consideration of the authors, whom, in the department we are met here to inquire into, I have found most useful to myself; and because, having none to guide me, I have often fallen into mistakes about books, and fancying I had found rich treasure, wasted my eyesight to no purpose, I thought it possible that the warnings of my own experience might occasionally serve you. But I am not here presuming to tell you what you ought to read and what you ought not.

You must in a great measure choose, each for himself, in what direction he will read. The paths of truth and knowledge are innumerable,—varied as the instinctive tastes of men. Of all unnatural things in this marred world, the most

fruitful of mischief is the blind love of uniformity. I loathe that word with all my soul. 'Tis a tyrannic word,—a word of evil omen to mankind,—a word that has more guilt and misery to answer for, than all other words in the language. God has not made men uniform, nor is there one species in the animate or the inanimate creation, which has not written in the endless multitude of its individual forms, this “perfect law of liberty.” Burke—a man gifted with wondrous insight into the subtle being of men,—discerned this law and rejoiced at it, and said, at the end of all his thinking over the beautiful and the sublime,—that the essence of beauty lay in its infinite variety.⁹

Search all the forest, and see if there be two leaves alike. Map the frosted panes of your Christmas window, and try do they match. Ask the shepherd does he not know every face in the flock distinctively. Read history, and say has any nation ever thriven, that even so much as tried to brand itself the *fac simile* of another. The idea of uniformity in national or intellectual

⁹ Enquiry into the origin of our ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful: iii. 15: iv. 23.

things is a pestilent idea;—it is the dark hope of a blind heart to chain the free will of man.

Be different then, and agree to differ,—’tis your only chance of healthful progress and competition intellectually;—’tis the last hope of peace and freedom that remains for you nationally. And for me,—if I could by any charm cajole you to believe that, in this affair of the study of history, I was peculiarly wise, and if you would consent to go forth of these halls, determined unanimously to open no books, save those I named,—I would not name them. I do not want followers or dupes : I wish to see you self-educated men. Far from desiring a uniformity of opinion, I long to see the value and need of the contrary acknowledged freely by all ; and believing that any one course of historic study, would have a tendency towards that uniformity of sentiment which I fear and abhor, I have purposely striven to show you points of view, so far apart and so various, that each man may, as his temper or curiosity prompts him, take a partly or wholly different course from that of his neighbour.

But having premised thus much, concerning your individuality and liberty of enquiry, there

are certain hints to study which still may serve you. Travel whither you will; but if there be a good map of the land you are going to, it were better to have it. Stop at what inns you like; but you must be great fools if you don't try to hear what others, who have been there before you, think of them. Rely on your own common sense and mother-wit, in the main; but don't be above enquiring what peculiar reptiles, or nuisances, or impositions, travellers there are exposed to.

There are also general rules of study,—not many indeed, but some—which it were well to know. Do not shrink in dismay at the notion that I am about to go through the usual list, beginning with “early rising”—and ending with “repeat over to yourself the last thing ere going to sleep, &c.” My hatred of uniformity is too strong for system-mongering of any sort: I never saw much good come of any jabbering of the Blair kind.¹⁰ *Principles* of study, like principles of art, are all that can be taught; and of these

¹⁰ One of most amusing plans for manœuvring the study of history may be found by the curious, in Prideaux' “Easy and Compendious Introduction for reading all sorts of History, contrived in a more facile way than hath heretofore been published: 1677:” in the first chapter whereof, which relates “to the Antediluvian, or long-lived fathers,” we are informed that “history is a commemoration of things past, with “the circumstances of time and place in distinct distances, intervals, or

there are exceedingly few. But detailed instructions how to study—what to read first, and what next, and what for a finish,—are about as absurd as directions to a poet how to compose, to an orator when to speak, to a painter what to draw. The culture of the mind is inscrutable to all such *doctrinaireism*; you must learn experimentally how to read history; there is no other way.

We glanced at the error of imagining that a historian ought to aim at being impartial. Let me remind you of that error for a moment again. When you are about to open the history of a country, and to read all that is to be said of it, put out of your head the silly notion, that whatever account bids highest for the character of neutrality, is the best. Ah, there is no neutrality in nature; there is no neutrality in that tangled web of things, whereof history purports to be the chronicler. Great things—great changes—great series of habits and dispositions do not happen neutrally. Justice herself is not neutral *in her*

“dynasties by lineal descents, for the readier help of memory and application.” And accordingly this wise Fellow of Oxford proceeds to marshal all human affairs into seven compartments, because that is the number most easily remembered; and, apologizing politely for going no further back than Nimrod, he brings us down to the Restoration of Charles II,—all in the course of 375 small quarto pages.

decisions. She hears both sides with equal ears, and is often tardy in uttering her sentence ; but when decided, her sword unsparingly descends. Justice is not blind ; her eyes are only bandaged beforehand least *prematurely* she should see. But she has eyes, and can use them too, for the detection of guilt, and the effectual punishment thereof. Were it otherwise, justice were no more just ; and this world, now confided to her rule, were not worth living in.

What then ? Where is the duty of neutrality to be exercised, and where not ? I will tell you. Keep your own minds neutral, as long as you can, in the study of any particular story. Read both sides. Hear all that the earnestness of either has to say. Do not predetermine, do not prejudge. Be just, and wear the bandage on your eyes, till you have heard out the cause. Then, and not till then, decide, and give your verdict. But if one comes to you in the debate, and says—I too have a little word to say ; both parties are probably to blame ; I do not say they are, but then recollect they may be ; black though it seems black, may after all be white ; and white though it looks white may turn out to be black, or at least grey : then recollect there are several

shades of grey: 'tis true they killed the man, or at least we will admit his death; but might he not have been in a delicate state of health, and have suffered as much from the excitement as the blows? I do not say that there is any direct evidence of such delicacy, but it is quite possible and credible: then as to their motives in breaking his skull, may not much be said? How do we know but these ill-looking fellows may have felt inspired by duty? they may have thought their victim a great evil to their country: they may undoubtedly, as is commonly alleged, have murdered the old man for money; but it is very remarkable that we find no accurate mention of how much they got: nor should it be forgotten, that money was very scarce just then, as can be shown statistically: and as for the person who it is said gave it to them, he was unquestionably poor; so that upon the whole, it appears but fair to come to—no very positive conclusion at all.

Now when you meet a character of this sort, do not hurt the creature; but bid him quietly good morning. There was a fool of this sort in my class at college; one of the earnest men he used to bore with his inexhaustible quibblings,

used to call him an educated idiot: so he literally was. All his learning and information so applied, but made the nuisance more intolerable. He could shuffle the cards for ever, but he could never win the game. Such men are your hyper-philosophical historians; they can talk, they can show learning, they can sow doubts in your minds; but they cannot teach, or lead, or win, or guide you.

It is my notion, that we have not time in this world for this solemn fiddle-faddle. If you want to be amused by feats of balancing,—go to a booth in a fair, and see the show-man poise a ladder on his chin with a donkey on the top of it. But if you want sound ideas that will stick by you,—if you want something like holding ground for your heart-anchors,—eschew these neutral, doubting, foggy-minded men. You want feelings, sentiments, judgments,—loves and hatreds,—to be something, and not nothing. Your hearts are to be cultivated, to be sown with somewhat, that they bring forth fruit accordingly. This man says, here is the true historic seed; another man says, nay, but it is here; look into both; if you like, try a little of both; and though there

be mingled with the honestest seed you buy, the germs of some weeds also, still you will have something for your labour. But don't buy chaff for seed. Don't be gulled by the advertisement that it is most pure and finely sifted chaff, and very cheap; will it grow?—that is the question: the only question. What signifies its nicety, its cheapness, its freedom from nettles. Better even nettles than no growth at all.

For my own part, I like to follow a man who walks before me, as if he was sure that he knew the way.

Suppose you are sick and send for a physician, and he comes to you and says—sir, your heart is deranged: I will prescribe accordingly. Not content with that version of the story, you apply to another, and he says—sir, I see distinctly you have bad digestion, the heart is engaged, but I lay less stress on that than my rival did. Much of what he told you to do was right; but you had better leave off part of his specifics. Now if you will follow either of these, 'tis probable he will cure you, or at all events do you some good. They both *say* they know what's the matter; and if you believe them, that will help the cure marvellously. But if, instead of

trying either of these or both, you take to some philosophical quack—a fellow without a decided opinion. Sir, your disease is of a complex kind; time only can develope what it is exactly; 'tis very wrong to be too sure; you appear undoubtedly to be dying, but you may *not* die: we will try various remedies, but recollect I don't undertake to say a cure is possible; I think it probable, and will receive your fee; do not despond, because you may recover; neither be sanguine, for we may not be able to discover incontrovertibly what the disease is: but you may as well try *this* dose; it can't do you any harm; it may possibly do you good.

What chance of his life would a man have in the paws of an animal like this? Yet there are very many books written upon these principles, and passing themselves off for history, which are no more like history than I am like Hercules.

First of all then, I would say to you, read connectedly. Try to know one thing well; and believe that it is better for you to feel a strong firm hold of that one bough, than to have it to say you scratched your shins against every briar in the wood. If ever this caution was requisite, it is at the present day. 'Tis the age of diffusion

and smatter. The mania for universality is at its zenith. The test of good education has been made to consist, not in what a man thoroughly knows, but in the number of things he can make people believe that he is not utterly ignorant of. General knowledge as it stands now, is litter more than a patch-work cloak for muffling our ignorance in. Every one knows or pretends to know a little chemistry, and a little botany, a little Latin, something of French, and to possess some general notions of history:—general balderdash!¹⁰ And then we have literary appliances to suit the fashion of the day; multitudes of summaries, abridgments, pinnock-catechisms, and so forth,—tools for the hapless memory of enslaved childhood to work with, in its panopticon prison.

A word as to these productions. The real use of them is, (or rather would be, if people understood their tendency aright,) that of dictionaries. A dictionary need not be written alphabetically or printed in columns. A dictionary may be arranged chronologically; I see no harm in that: and of all things, history requires such a help to

¹¹ "Balderdash,—anything jumbled together without judgment; a rude mixture; a confused discourse."—JOHNSON'S Dictionary.

practical reference. But the mistake lies in the misuse and abuse of these mere mechanical implements, and the arbitrary and stupid substitution of them for the great and noble thing—history itself. You wish your son at ten years old, to know the history of England. Now unless the poor little fellow is unfortunately a precocious child, he is at that age wholly unfit to comprehend the history of any country; but you forget this: here is blunder the first. To accomplish your unnatural purpose, you seek out the best academy of “general education,” where Latin, English, French, Italian, dancing, use of the globes, fencing, arithmetic, public speaking, and astronomy are to be had in the most approved style, at moderate terms. Into this dunce-factory you fling your boy. There he is doomed to waste five or six hours a day of the most precious season of life, learning “every thing by turns and nothing long.” But he comes home at vacation with a decent stock of cut and dry answers to class questions; among the rest, with several dozen bits of the chopped bones of history; and you are delighted at his progress. How many blunders shall we reckon here?

I remember well having had, when very young,

a peculiar taste for geography. From that best of useful toys, a dissected map, I had progressed of my own accord to a tolerable knowledge of an ordinary sized atlas, whose varied outlines possessed for me, not a few of the charms of a book of pictures. From poring over the topographic forms, I took to copying them: and I still recal with exquisite delight, the joy and pride with which I gazed upon my first rude draught of our own country's form. But it was my fate to go to a popular school, where universality was the aim, and exhibition the test of every thing. My facility in geography was detected, and appropriately punished. I was set to get off by heart the eighty-three departments of France, with the three chief towns in each. I got a Christmas premium for saying them all in the order they stand in Guy's Grammar. It cost me a week's preparation to accomplish this feat; and I am sure that it was the worst spent week of my life: I forget almost every one of the departments now; and the disgust which the miserable task gave me, I cannot shake off to the present hour.

But far worse is this catechetical system, when applied to the subtler matter of history.

Reflect, I beseech you, upon what these his-

torical catechisms are, and upon the manner in which they are compiled. They profess to be the essential oil of history—nay, its elixir; they offer to give you in a condensed and intellectually portable shape, the cream of the whole pail. Now it is pretty plain that if such a thing were possible at all, its fabrication would need a far abler head than that of an ordinary historian. He, simple man, asks a ream of paper to make his rough draught upon; but your condenser and squeezer will write off the whole for you, in a dozen clean pages of shorthand. History in shorthand!—but let us proceed. The historian retires from the bustle of life, full of experience and wisdom, to give all the force of his enthusiasm and knowledge to the difficult work he has set before him. Months and years roll over his calm brow; summer's bloom is not half enjoyed, and winter's joviality is half unshared by him, that the pace of his lonely progress may not be retarded, and that he may cheat death of witnessing his task's unaccomplishment. He triumphs; and at this infinite cost to him, we have half-a-dozen volumes. Then one of the pinnockers enters the field, with a bargain signed, sealed, and delivered in hand, whereby he hath agreed with

a certain speculating man in the trade, to produce in six weeks from the date thereof, a perfect compendium of the said six volumes, arranged in the way of question and answer: and the said catechism shall be fact-proof,—that is to say, it is warranted to contain every event and date *of importance* mentioned in the said six volumes: the whole not to exceed forty-eight school-book pages. I have known work of this sort done, paid for, aye, and thought better than commonly executed, by men who never had an idea of their own from the time they came into the world;—men who had just as much fitness to judge between facts of importance, and events of unimportance, (to adopt for a moment their own ignorant slang,) as the five-pound note they got for the job.

But the truth is, history—no more than patriotism, or religion, or art, or any other mystic thing—cannot be written by job, or learned by rote. I say if a man had all the powers of Thucydides, and Sallust, and Davila combined, he could not write a catechism of history, that would, or could, or should be read as history, or read at all, except as a dictionary is read, by scraps at a time. All attempts to teach history

by catechisms have failed ; and all attempts of the sort must fail, because they are in their very conception a blunder,—all the more mischievous for its popularity. 'Tis a wretched attempt to conjure—not by acting on the imagination, or on the senses even,—but by the mere spade-work exhumation of the naked relics of past times, and the rattling of them together.

But what are we to do then ? I can't recollect half what I read ; how am I to fix it fast in my memory, without such aids ?

A friend of mine once asked me somewhat a similar question, adding as proof that the fault was in his memory, and not in want of industry, —“I assure you I read Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, twice over, from “beginning to end last autumn, and yet I do not “believe I could answer ten consecutive questions, in any part of it.”—“And I assure you,” replied I, “that I am sincerely rejoiced to hear “it. The probability is that, if you could, it “would have been so much time thrown away.” You don't recollect the half of the names ; well, and what then ? Do you think a general fit to win a battle, who refuses to fight 'till he knows all the names of his men ? Life is a battle ;

knowledge of things past is part of your forces ; the question is, do you know how to use them against the powers of darkness you have to contend with? if so, you will conquer, or at least make a good fight; if not, run away, and hide yourself and them as quickly as you can. Or look at the matter in another point of view; call historic knowledge a weapon; then I say, you may be trying to carry too many weapons, more than you can use with skill. Beware of trusting to the stock of arms, and not to your own good use of them. The poor Chinese carry two swords one in each hand, hoping that when these are rattled together, the clangour will frighten their foes. You laugh at them; take care least you are not bent on as silly a project regarding study.

But can one read too much? . Undoubtedly you may.¹² What do you want your mind to be, —a manure heap,—or a garden? Manure is of no good while in a heap,—save to grow forced and unseasonable delicacies for the provocation of

¹² So thought Bacon, when he said,—“to spend too much time in studies is sloth; to use them for ornament is affectation; and to make your judgment only by their rules, is the humour of a scholar.” It is all very well to be a good scholar, but it is better to be a good man; and, generally speaking, goodness consists in action.

unhealthy palates. But the real use of it is, when spread judiciously and at intervals over an honest soil; it fertilizes, warms, and enriches that whereby it becomes absorbed, and in due time aids it to bring forth wholesome fruit,—twenty, fifty, or a hundred fold. I wish your folks who are unhappy, because they cant recollect all they read, names, dates, places, and the like, would just ask themselves this question—what does the farmer strew his field with rich compost for? Is it to have it to show? Is it to keep it there as he strewed it? Is it to have a crop of manure? why, it must all vanish down into the earth silently, before it can do any good whatsoever.

What then? Is it a bad sign to show that you recollect accurately what you read? By no means, provided that what impresses itself upon your memory be the vivifying spirit of history, and not its dead letter. But I have long believed that what we call memory is in truth no housewife of a faculty at all; but rather that each power of our understanding and feeling of our heart, hath its individual storehouse, wherein it treasures up its own peculiar riches. Should I ever turn metaphysician, I will try to demonstrate this. Meanwhile the distinction is sufficiently

plain, to enable you I hope to catch my meaning, when I say—try to remember what you read of history with your affections, not merely with your powers of intellect. 'Tis a moral thing, or it is nothing. Teach your heart how to recollect, and let the head recollect also, if it will.

And this brings us to a class of books, of which hitherto I have said nothing; I allude to those usually embraced under the denomination of the philosophy of history. These are indeed abridgments in their outward form, but they are in reality the most perfect converse of those mischievous pretences at condensation, we have been laughing at. Every philosophy of history, whether inspired by a belief in the possibility of a perfect republic, with all things in common, and the highest power uninterruptedly vested in the bravest and the best, like that of Plato;¹³ or an admiration for oligarchy, like that of Aristotle;¹⁴ or respect for a landed aristocracy, like Cicero;¹⁵ or the hope of reproducing classic notions and ideas, in the midst of decaying feudalism, like Machiavelli;¹⁶ or the design of

¹³ The Commonwealth.

¹⁴ Politics: vi.

¹⁵ De Republica.

¹⁶ Discourses on Livy.

establishing a theocratic system on the rights of the many, to be ruled on orthodox principles alone, with the privilege of regicide, as propounded with opposite convictions of orthodoxy by Buchanan and Mariana;¹⁷ or the justice of absolute power, like Hobbes;¹⁸ or of republicanism, like Harrington and Sydney;¹⁹ or of constitutional monarchy, like Bolingbroke²⁰ and Montesquieu;²¹ or of democracy qualified with an elective aristocracy and sovereignty, like Adams;²² by universal assertion of the French Assembly's "Rights of Man," like Volney²³ and Paine;²⁴ by enmity to all religion, like Voltaire;²⁵ or in defence of the idea of the church, like Bossuet²⁶ and Frederic Schlegel;²⁷ or of the doctrine of providence, like our countrymen, Miller²⁸ and George Croly;²⁹ all have sought to pluck from

¹⁷ *De Jure Regni Scotorum* :—*De Rege et Regis Institutione*.

¹⁸ *Leviathan*.

¹⁹ *Oceana* :—*Political Discourses*.

²⁰ *Letters on English History*.

²¹ *L'Esprit des Lois* :—*La Décadence des Romains*.

²² *Defence of the Constitutions of the United States*.

²³ *Les Ruines des Empires*.

²⁴ *Common Sense*.

²⁵ *L'Histoire Philosophique*, &c.

²⁶ *L'Histoire Universelle*.

²⁷ *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, already quoted.

²⁸ *Lectures on Mod: Hist:* delivered before the University of Dublin, 1818.

²⁹ *The Cycles of Divine Providence*.

history's bending boughs, such fruit as "seemed pleasant to the eye, and to be desired to make one wise." As their aims were various, so were their selections; but I wish you to note, that these are of all writers the most irreconcilably opposed to the base business of cider-pressing human experience.

To this class of writings likewise belong the well known Lectures on Civilization by M. Guizot; and a work now little read, but which is full of fine thoughts and original views, the lectures of Johann Müller³⁰ on Universal History. You must not confound idea-ful books like these, with those cold and bloodless things that we have already reprobated. A wide range is no fault, if a man be equal to it. The man of true genius can climb to a point of vision, whence all time and fate appear outspread at his feet; and without being blinded or giddied by his elevation, can judge truly of the great proportions a comparatively few great objects bear to one another, and to the whole.³¹ The misery is, that men of the meanest powers of sight and appreciation, im-

³⁰ The celebrated historian of Switzerland.

³¹ "Whoever is persuaded that the study of particular histories is alone sufficient to convey a perfect view and knowledge of the whole, may very properly be compared with one who, on surveying the di-

pelled by the vanity of making a great effort, and of telling a great tale, clamber to some pinnacle they fancy to be the summit, and thence by sheer dint of telescopic toil, jot down in their misty map all manner of objects, without proportion, discrimination, or intelligent aim.

The best advice I can give you as regards reading of this sort is, to postpone every thing in the shape of historical philosophy, until you have made yourselves familiar with the particular and minute pictures of those countries, in whose fate you take most interest; you will then appreciate with tenfold ease and aptitude, the grand truths which men of generalising power educe from a comparison of all together. But as there is no royal road to mathematics, so there is none to history. Generalities are wholly unintelligible if studied previous to particulars. Pictures of the concrete first: then, but not till then, analytical guesses at the hidden ground-laws of being.

Once again I would say, read connectedly. Incontinence is debauching, and debilitating, and debasing, in every region of thought or passion.

“vied members of a body that was once endued with life and beauty,
“should persuade himself that he had from thence obtained a just conception of all the comeliness and active vigour, which it had received
“from nature.”—POLYBIUS: Hampton's Translation.

Read nothing, or read earnestly ; and if you are in earnest, you will not be satisfied with a first or a single view. You will study every point of view. You will trust to no individual authority, for none such is blindly trust-worthy. You will, if opportunity serve, go back to the sources of your favourite author's information. He is your guide, and you will show respect to him ; but he is a man ; and you will question him.³² The references in the margin or at foot are the means for doing this. They bid you ask as you proceed, upon what authority 'sayest thou these things ? Without them, history is mere preaching ; every thing must be taken on the preacher's word, and you must be mute worshippers, not enquiring students.³³

No modern historian can hope to win the thorough confidence of his readers, when he narrates incidents whereof he can have no personal or even cotemporary knowledge, unless he observes the rule of "punctually referring to

³² " I ask many questions of each historian I meet with ;—what are his principles ?—what country he is of ?—what the vicissitudes of his life hitherto have been ?—for it is impossible but that his individual feelings will more or less colour his work."—BAYLE :—Phil. Dict. iii. 37.

³³ See Goldsmith's critique on Smollett's Hist. of England—Works, vol. iii. p. 431 : Prior's edition.

“ the spring head whence the stream of his narrative flows.”³⁴ Indeed there is no excuse for a man not doing so ; and there ought to be no pardon given to him who does not. It is wilful trifling with the rights of his reader, to omit the authority whereupon he claims his credence. A writer has no right to be believed, who wantonly withholds the grounds of his own belief. He is an ambassador from the kingdom of the past, to us who are citizens of the present, and craves our friendly estimation,—well, we are ready to receive him : but he must first show his credentials.

’Tis a lying world. Lies are as thick as blackberries. They spring up in Time’s seedfield as elsewhere, without our sowing or tending. Let them alone, and they would choke and outgrow utterly the flowers. But while they are growing, and when you go weeding, ’tis above all things requisite that you know how to discriminate accurately the tares from the wheat. If they are undistinguishable, what can you do but mischief? You may take one for the other, and pull up truth by the roots instead of error. The man who wants to sell you the field ready cropped,

³⁴ GOLDSMITH—Critique on Smollett.

says there are no weeds, 'tis *all* wholesome feeding. Of course he does. His object is to sell his field. But you, if ye be wise men, will not buy what ye dont know—will not believe what ye are denied the power of examining into and authenticating. If the man who writes a history be of bad character otherwise, I recommend you to have no dealings with him at all. He might not cheat you, but then he might; and there is no feeling more deteriorating to your minds—none that neutralizes so utterly the great good of history, as the haunting sense of mistrust. If you want to harden and poison the heart of man, hand him over to the *dæmon* of suspicion. Make doubt your confidant, and you will soon cut acquaintance with all faith. Habituate yourselves to suspect, and you will soon grow unable to confide.

Now that is not the temper in which history can be read to profit. You must feel that you are safe; at least, you must not feel that possibly every second line is false. And it is for sake of this security, that I recommend you to select those historic works chiefly which either are personal testimony of cotemporary facts; or are fortified so with correlative aid, that

you feel in the guidance of a strong and honest man, and not of a superficial or a dishonest mere compiler. No man of sense or character, no matter how conscious of his rectitude—no matter how justly he relies upon the innate force of his eloquence and earnestness, for carrying his readers with him, will neglect these fortifications of his fame. Better, aye and braver, to meet the questioner on the threshold, than let him come into the heart of your state. Better refer him at once to your authority, than give him any pretence for saying you have none.

If you take into account the innumerable differences that exist between the ways of thinking, modes of living, forms of intercourse, of any two periods in the history of the same people, (to say nothing of that of different peoples)—you will feel how essential to the true comprehension of any one such period it is, that you should get into the spirit of the time. Without this, all is dark, or false in proportion, and false in colouring. It is like trying to breathe in an atmosphere incapable of sustaining life. But it is no easy matter to get thus into the spirit of the time. In the tomb of one of the most illustrious princes of Egypt, there was this inscription,—

“ I am Osymandas, king over kings : if any man
“ would know how great I am, let him try and
“ do what I have done.”³⁵

It is well worth while, however, to continue our contemplation of one nation's life and development, until we begin to feel in some measure as we believe that they felt. I am disposed to think our reading and remembering is nearly valueless, until we are conscious of some such conviction. And to this end, it is well to read different versions of the same story, if not *pari passu*, at least consecutively, and in or about the same time. By this means the things which are admitted by all relators grow fast in our minds, and those which are disputable become the objects of a more judicial investigation. Often it happens also, that the complexities and anomalies which the minuter narratives of contemporary writers fail to explain, are cleared up by the bold insight of subsequent contemplators. Sometimes the riddles prove insoluble for many generations ; at last the intuitive sense of some one man of genius accomplishes, what a crowd of predecessors has essayed in vain. Still there is

³⁵ DIODORUS SICULUS: i. 4.

historically no such thing, I am persuaded, as what passes vulgarly under the name of superseding. A good book can never be superseded; its reward is with it; its use always remains.³⁶ I have ever looked upon this notion of superseding as special nonsense. Life cannot supersede life. The immortal cannot be superseded, even by immortality. Were Machiavelli or De Thou dead almanacks, the fresh vigour of Sismondi would supersede them. But they are not so. They prance along in their sixteenth century amble, like the musing palfreys of their day. All the dark gothic shadows of their age are deeply, truly mirrored in their still bosoms. All the enterprise of awakening civilization pants and guesses, wonders and plans half audibly there,—full of mystery, half confidence, half fear. They are instinct with the spirit of their time;—they are true *ιστορες*, actual eye-witnesses, speaking quaintly down to us still, from their carved

³⁶ Very beautiful is that passage in Herder's preface, where he says: "Ten years ago, when I was first publishing my little book, which I called, *Another Philosophy of History*,—I was far from wishing to proclaim—I too am a Painter. I meant rather to convey the desire I felt, to endeavour to point out, amid the numerous beaten tracks that men are generally treading, one little path which seemed to have been neglected, and yet was probably worth exploring: and the essay was intended for no more than a loose leaf, or supplement to supplements, as its form likewise denoted."

oak frames;—who will endure if these shall pass away? Who will escape the kingdom of death, if these have not worked out for themselves salvation?

V

ANCIENT HISTORY.

“ And now stand forth, ye giant forms,—shades of the earliest chieftains—sons of gods—who glimmer through the rocky halls of antiquity; and ye conquerors of the earth from Babylon to Macedonia,—ye long rows of famous consuls and dictators,—ye dynasties of Cæsars, Huns, Arabians, Tartars,—ye venerable councillors of kings, and warriors on the car of victory,—stand forth and let us survey you, as in an assembly of the gods; and say—were ye the greatest of mankind? How few of you can claim that title! Or best of men? Still fewer of you have that praise. The originators or inspiring movers of great things done? Rather, the wheels whereon the Invisible Ruler has driven the wondrous machinery of His universal government, across the ocean of Time.”¹

J. MÜLLER.

I have already sought to fix your attention on the nature, use, and scope of history. I have endeavoured to show you how the genuine may best be distinguished from the false, and how that which is true may be read with most advantage. We have contemplated the sort of narratives, whose temper and tendency are the best worth studying, and the sort of witnesses whose testimony is the safest for you to believe. These considerations have been general—steps to the

¹ Conclusion of Lectures on Universal History, iii. p. 422.

door of historic study,—preliminary, requisite,—may I hope not wholly untreadable, even though imperfect and but rudely chiselled, as I am too deeply conscious that they are.

But now at length we stand upon the threshold, and seek to open the gate of this great temple of knowledge, and to look in at the chief objects there, for a brief season. I would once more remind you, that you ought not hastily or thoughtlessly to enter within the precincts of the shrine, or with the frivolous conceit that you will be able to appreciate fully or familiarly, the value of what shall there be presented to your view, at a first or hasty glance. Frequent and long tarrying visits you must pay; hour after hour, and day after day—(did health and your other avocations permit, I would be tempted to say, night after night,)—you must study calmly the records of the past, before you can derive therefrom the true instruction they are fitted to impart. Surface truth is easily come at, and is proportionably apt to be forgotten. Only in the sweat of thy brain shall thy spirit eat and be satisfied; this is the curse-law given unto man. The fixed stars of knowledge are afar off. You may see them at a great distance, and fancy they

are not further from you than those of less intrinsic lustre. But when you come to look at them steadily,—to compare and judge of them more discriminatively, immeasurably vast does the difference grow; essentially unlike do they begin to appear; as formed for incalculably higher and mightier purpose do those seem to you, whereof you know the least. So it is with the objects revealed by history.

The tides of time are of no even height. Their records tell how variously they have risen, and how, in obedience often to inscrutable causes, they have ebbed again. Egypt—Babylon—Persia—Greece—Carthage—Rome,—these are the spring tides of human energy and civilization, encroaching for a little time farther than those that went before, and those that followed them, upon the parched and sterile strands of oblivion.

Of most other nations what do we know? Nothing—literally nothing. They were—that's all. 'Tis said their home was here,—or principally here;—'tis said that it was there—at least occasionally: and do not such and such monuments indicate, that they must at least have visited this other region? But *what* they were,—how they were,—wherein they resembled those

of whom we know a superficial something,—that is all a blank.

About seventeen centuries² before Christ, the penetrable mist of guess and doubt begins to clear a little. A few great objects grow discernible, though still most dimly. Perhaps their importance has been untruly swollen, by being viewed through this notoriously magnifying medium.

As we gaze, the sequestered might of the great Indian and Chinese empires loom in upon us. They stand there—apart, immutable, already ancient in their aspect, ere yet the historied kingdoms of the earth are cradled, or in being. Further westward, what is this unturreted trophy, whose yet uncrumbled cone resembles naught except itself? Land of Egypt—not yet sentenced for thy sins to denationalization!—in this unchronicled time a land of empire and of conquest,—of haughty power and pre-eminence. A confused murmur, like the echo of a voice that has been and is no more, speaks to us earnestly, but almost unintelligibly, of a great glory of Egyptian arms: how through the night-time of

² HEEREN, *Hist. Res. Egyptians*, ii.

history,³ Osiris, Amenophis, Sesostris, and their sons, led the dwellers by the Nile to deeds of signal valour; how they were irresistible in war, and spread the terror of their name over all Arabia, Lybia, and Ethiopia; how Africa was the centre of the world then, and they its rulers: how issuing northward up through Asia Minor, they quelled the barbarous Scythians,—passing over the Caucasus and the dark stream of the Don, to teach European Thrace that they were the “kings of kings:”⁴—how eastward they reined not in their chariot steeds, till their thirst was slaked in the far Ganges.⁵

Even out of these faint shadows there is something to be learned. The ancient might of Egypt was not merely that of national marauding. Domestic improvements and the development of the national resources of their country, seem even at a period earlier than this to have

³ “Egypt had certainly been civilized above a thousand years before the time of Herodotus.”—HEEREN, *Hist. Res.* i.

⁴ SCHLEGEL, i. 7.

⁵ Is it hypercriticism to notice, that the pyramid near lake Mœris, which is described as being built of brick, (HERODOTUS, ii. 136,)—and which has been conjectured to be that cemented by the unrequited sweat of the Hebrews, is now “a heap of rubbish?”—HEEREN, i.

occupied their thoughts. Lake Mœris,⁶ and the canals which form artificial branches from the Nile, are believed to be more than three thousand years old. They were built for good purposes, and they remain,—monuments of national wisdom and skill; the conquests are forgotten, or are constantly confounded with fable,—the just doom of national guilt and folly.

The towers they erected to commemorate the evils they had inflicted on mankind, unlike the native monuments of their domestic policy, crumbled in due time; and nought remained to tell, when the flood of violence had been there, how it broke in, how long it drowned the independence of each land, or what was the signal of its subsidence.

A spirit of colonization, animated, as it is conjectured, by the fanatic desire of spreading the worship of their peculiar mysteries,—begins to be visible.⁷ Other impulses may have likewise been at work. Egypt appears to have gradually become—what every ambitious and

⁶ Lake Mœris was dug by the king whose name it bears: he is supposed to have reigned about 1500 B. C.—(HEEREN, *Manual of Ancient Hist.* p. 64.) The canals of Memphis were made by Sesostris, probably about a century later.

⁷ SCHLEGEL, i. 7.

covetous state has sooner or later become—denationalised. The fruit of conquest is unearned wealth; and twined with every laurel-wreath of victory is the leaf of that deadly nightshade. The people were unhappy, and unhappy men are glad to emigrate.⁸ During the federal system of the twelve chiefs, each of whom presided over a province assigned to him, there was peace and justice in the land. This government was strong enough to protect and satisfy the people,—not strong enough for domestic tyranny or foreign acquisition.⁹ Psammetichus, in order to make himself sole sovereign, took Greek battalions into his pay.¹⁰ From that time the defence of the country never reverted to the only hands, by which any country can be long defended; and from that day to this, Egypt has been a suffering, plundered, casually respited, but generally oppressed subject of misrule.

Few things have come to my mind more laden with the evidences of fate, than the rising up as

⁸ "Domestic troubles may have been instrumental in producing those emigrations which now appear so strange. Civil discord existed in Egypt under various forms. We thus observe a great conflict of interests between the agricultural province of Upper Egypt, and the commercial and manufacturing province of the Lower." SCHLEGEL, i. 7.

⁹ DIODORUS SICULUS, i. 5.

¹⁰ HERODOTUS, ii. 152.

'twere from the dead, in its appointed time, of the fame and genius of the Pharaohs. Never men wielding the resources, or embodying the ideas of their nation, wrought so hard against the doom of oblivion. The unique grandeur of their public works is not accounted for by mere utility,—that gelding of a motive, that is ready to pull in any harness, or carry any load. Thank God, there is something in the glories of man's endeavour in all ages, for which this poor utility cannot account,—which neither can it talk down; and the stupendous monuments of Egypt are among them. They remind me as the long-drawn sighs of a giant time, at the thought that it must pass away and be forgotten. Be forgotten! —the mournfullest thought in man,—the crushingest—most unutterably intolerable.

With frenzied zeal, they rose up in revolt ¹¹ against the sentence of that bitter law, "thou shalt perish!" The unbending, self-centered spirit of

¹¹ Aristotle's notion that the great works of Egypt were undertaken by despotic kings, merely to employ and impoverish their people, (*Politics*, vii. Book) seems alike at variance with the intimations of those ancients, who had the best opportunity of hearing the traditional truth, and with the inferences of modern research. That the multitude were employed to gratify the architectural ambition of the aristocratic castes, may be conceded without denuding that ambition of all ideality or nobleness of purpose.—See DE PAUW.

architecture spake comfort to them, and opened a door of hope, where in every other direction the death-veil seemed impenetrable. "Build immortally,"—it cried; "outbuild the fury of the storm, the yawn of the earthquake, the inveteracy of decay;—inscribe your names on sculptured causeway,¹² massive obelisk,¹³ and labyrinthine temple,¹⁴—and let the frescoed caverns¹⁵ of marble pyramid unfadingly record your fame:—thus shall forgetfulness be cheated of its prey, and Egypt's kings, and priests, aye, and artificers, shall live for ever!"¹⁶ Well? Whole days, and years, and lifetimes were devoted to the working out this thought.¹⁷ The artist carved¹⁸

¹² "This work was little inferior to the pyramids; it was five furlongs in length, ten fathoms wide, and in part eight fathoms (fifty-two feet) high. It was formed of polished stones, sculptured with the figures of animals."—HERODOTUS, ii. 124.

¹³ See the account of the elevation in the Court of St. Peter's of the famous obelisk, which with its enormous swathings poised in air, weighed 1,000,000 Roman pounds, and needed nine hundred men to move it from the spot where it had lain for centuries,—in RANKE: Hist: iv. § 8.

¹⁴ "This also I have seen," says Herodotus, "and it surpasses its fame. And indeed if all the works the Greeks have executed were put together, they would not equal the expense or toil of this Labyrinth alone." It was a monument erected in common by the twelve cotemporary princes already alluded to, who governed Egypt (ii. 147, 148) about 700 B. C.—HEEREN, ii. 25, note.

¹⁵ See BELZONI.

¹⁶ DIODORUS SICULUS, i. 4.

¹⁷ HERODOTUS, ii. 124, 125.

¹⁸ Idem.

in hieroglyph the names and titles, cost and number of hands upon each wondrous pile; and men consoled themselves in death, with the assurance that they should be remembered. Well? A harder hand than time's,—that of denationalization,—came. The dwellers by the Nile hated to recollect their ancestors; their fathers' glory had become their shame. The heart of pride in country died within them. They were a beaten people. Memory is a taunt to such a people. The learning of Egypt sunk; its knowledge withered imperceptibly away; the inscriptions were left unread till they grew illegible; the names such miracles of industry had been wrought to perpetuate, were forgotten! The pitying traveller came, enquiring of these mighty time-stones whence Egypt's life was reckoned, but received no answer: ruin stood in the desert there,—sullen and dumb.

Hieroglyphic writing had degenerated thus from world-eloquence to a mere local enigma. The wisdom of antiquity, fallen into second childhood, had gone astray, and could give no account of itself. Last of all, sceptical criticism in a pert mood asked cleverly,—what evidence there was that the pyramids were built so

very long ago?—or indeed for that matter, that, previous to the Greek and Roman periods, there was any royal or sacerdotal race in the land, less fabulous than the Olympian born founders of other states? And no answer, better than a plausible guess, could be given to the sneer, after half a century of European curiosity and research.

But oblivion hath not conquered, for all that. By a succession of fortunate discoveries, a clue to the Phonetic alphabet in which these so long dumb memorials had been written, was found. Much way has been made by Young,¹⁹ Zoega, and Champollion.²⁰ No man can yet recite flippantly the year and day, when this or the other edifice was constructed, or the dignity and appellation of its architect; but way has been made; the death-ice of oblivion and futility is broken; the impossibility of decyphering the symbol chronicles of three thousand summers past, is no longer asserted or believed.²¹ Enough has been already

¹⁹ See Encyclop. Metropol. : article Hieroglyphics.

²⁰ How much praise and gratitude is due to each of these illustrious antiquarians, has been and still is the subject of varied and not uninteresting controversy.

²¹ HEEREN : Hist. Researches into the Antiquities of the Egyptians, Introduction. I am acquainted with no better summary than that which Professor Heeren has given us.

done, to establish distinctly that the most magnificent of these mighty time-stones, “are the
 “ works of the Pharaohs. A light has thus been
 “ thrown upon the history of those distant ages,
 “ and many parts of it verified in a way that
 “ could hardly have been looked for; the opinions
 “ of those who had ejected the Pharaohs from
 “ the pages of history, and regarded them merely
 “ as fabulous beings, have fallen to the ground,
 “ —the monuments of these ancient men with
 “ their names sculptured thereupon, stand there
 “ and confute them.”²² This is much,—a grand, a noble thing. If this be not accounted great, I frankly own I know not what is great.

It is a fact of much interest and meaning, that the primitive civilization and glory of Egypt arose under no single dynasty, but were the offspring of a condition of society, where political rule was distributed to a great extent. There was an Egyptian land and people, but no one monarch of Egypt. Cotemporary princes ruled²³

²² HEEREN, ii. p. 9.

²³ After the dynasty of the Sesostridæ, a revolution took place, and a dodecharchy (*i. e.* twelve federal states) was the result.—HEEREN, ii. 117, *note*. The names of the chief of these separate states were—Elephantes, or Philæ, Thebes, Memphis, This, Heracleopolis, Mendes, Bubastus, Sebennytus, Tanis, and Sais. Of these, Memphis and Thebes are believed to have been the most puissant and durable.—*Idem*, ii. 102.

their respective districts,—the priests and military officers bearing a considerable share of power. Sesostris and other warlike sovereigns are indeed called kings of Egypt, and such they may by their pre-eminent genius have been, in their own lives and that of their immediate descendants. But the valley of the Nile, in the green days of its fame, as it was no single patrimony, reverted frequently in peaceful times to its ancient diversity of rule. Nor does all sign of national independence disappear, until the period when these primary lineaments of its domestic freedom fade from view. Thenceforth, we behold this unhappy land reeling beneath the alternate violence of native autocrats and foreign satraps.

From the central level of Western Asia sprang the first distinct and chronicled stream of empire. That was the birth-place of the first national ambition; and to that congenial nursery of conquest, did the conspirators against the world's liberty revert, at various periods. The traveler wanders there now, and gazes on the wrecks of more than ordinary mortal ambition scattered round;—he cannot help believing that this was the greatest city of the world—greater beyond all comparison than any whose chronicles remain.

Can he help believing that, not for this Babel-work of crushing earth, or scaling heaven, were signal and unearthly powers given unto man ?

The description of Babylon, as it stands in the works of modern compilers, extracted from the various authorities of antiquity, is in itself astonishing. The outer walls are said to have been sixty miles in length ; and forming a perfect square, the leading intersecting streets that ran from gate to gate, must have been fifteen miles long. The area it covered must consequently have been nearly three times that of London, the largest city now in existence. But this was not a dense mass of habitations ; gardens, orchards, even it is conjectured large pastures and corn fields, affording thus a resource both of food and relaxation during an enemy's encampment.²⁶ Its brazen gates, and the solid depth of its walls, seemed to defy assault.

But vain are the strength of gates or walls, when the knell of the aggressor is sounding. Two hundred and ten years had not passed, from the organization of the Babylonian empire, till Cyrus, the founder of another mighty

²⁴ SCHLEGEL, i. 7.—HERDER, xii. 1.—HEEREN, *Hist. Res.* &c.

kingdom, sat down before its impregnable ramparts. Mad with power and impunity, and "given over to a strong delusion, that he should believe a lie," the degenerate monarch fancied that his throne never could be shaken. In the midst of the siege, he holds high carnival, and in the zenith of his riot, calls for the sacred vessels of the captive Jews, that the lewd comrades of tyranny may slake their fevered thirst, in the golden cups once dedicated to the worship of the only True God. The drunken despot suddenly grows pale; the freezing current drains fast from his spent heart; the brimming goblet falls; look! look—'tis there! bright as the lightning, and as brief—"thou art weighed and found wanting—thy kingdom is parted from thee—and is already in thy rival's hand!"²⁵

That night fell Babylon. Amid the tumult of the feast, and while yet the riddle was unfolding, chosen bands, treading unperceived the channel of the river, whose waters had been turned aside for the purpose, entered the city. Along the celebrated quays were the massive gates of brass, which guarded the flights of

²⁵ DANIEL, v. chap.

steps that terminated each street running to the river. 'Tis said their strength was such, that had they been, as usually, fast locked, the troops of Cyrus must have retired from their attempt without a blow.²⁶ But the hour of Babylon was come. Two hundred years of unbridled empire had uplifted the vain-glorious Babylonians above all salutary prudence; and when the creeping vanguard of the Mede rose at midnight from the river's bed, the infrangible gates stood open!

This is history: and this, meagre and dim as the whole narrative of the Assyrian dynasty must ever be, is pregnant with deep meaning and instruction. Those symbol words were written for our learning, like all other world-wide truths. In other characters have they not been written upon other guilty walls? Has not their reading knelled the doom of wrong, full many a time and oft, in later days? Not there alone, but in every revel home, where the laws and rights of suffering captive man are set at nought, history re-echoes the accents that first rung in Belshazar's banquetting halls,

²⁶ HERODOTUS, i. 190, 191.

telling of One who shall be Judge and King hereafter !

From the mountains that rise above the fertile shores of the Persian Gulf, came the celebrated clan whereof Cyrus was the head.²⁷ How long their forefathers had dwelt among those hills, worshipping nature²⁸ in the elements and “the host of heaven,”²⁹ we know not. That they were brave, hardy, and given to a roving life is tolerably certain ; and the period of their military emigration from their ancient homes, is believed to have been about the middle of the sixth century B. C.³⁰ Under the leadership of Cyrus they subdued the Medes, to whom they had been subject,—the Lydians, over whom Cræsus ruled,—then Babylon, and almost the whole of Asia Minor. Cambyses added Egypt to the Persian Empire ;³¹ and the warlike race, whose descendants have caused ourselves so deep and dark an interest under the name of Affghans, —were compelled to yield tribute to Darius Hystaspis.³²

²⁷ ARRIAN, v. 4.

²⁸ HERODOTUS, i. 131.

²⁹ Idem.—See also the frequent allusions in the Sacred writings, 2 KINGS, xvii. 6—27.

³⁰ HEEREN, ii. 1.

³¹ DIODORUS SICULUS, ii. 1.

³² HEEREN, ii. 1.

The picture drawn by Herodotus of the early manners and ideas of the Persians is full of interest. They hold falsehood in abomination, and to be in debt they look upon as little less reprehensible, knowing how it tends to undermine the habit of speaking the truth.³³ They think it incredible that a child can assail his parent; and whenever cases of death by the hand of a son occur, they account for it by imputing illegitimacy or guilt to the murderer's origin.³⁴ Domestic despotism, so inveterate and universal in the East, was restrained by them to a considerable extent; and severity of punishment was forbidden, even where the sovereign was the judge.³⁵ They relied upon the increase of their numbers, and the maintainance of youthful discipline, for the stability of their power; and the exceeding simplicity of their worship, contrasted as it stood with the crawling superstition and sensual idolatry of their neighbours, exercised doubtless a mystic but all pervading influence on the formation of their national character.

³³ HERODOTUS, i. 150.

³⁴ Idem, 151.

³⁵ Idem, 153.

But Herodotus mentions one fatal trait, from which, as from a parasitic stem, all other evils sprang, and clasping the once colossal might of Persia in their insinuating bonds, prepared her fall. "Of all the nations I have seen, the Persians are the most ready to adopt foreign manners:"³⁶ and he enumerates a variety of instances—some apparently of trivial moment,—others of a far different character,—which they had already grown familiar with in his day. Whether, without this fault, they could have defied the decay of discipline for a lengthened period, it is vain to conjecture; we only know, after a brilliant existence of two hundred years,³⁷ the kingdom of Cyrus was subdued by the arms of Macedon.

The magical rapidity with which all the celebrated empires of Asia have risen, is only paralleled by the helplessness they have invariably exhibited in their fall. The fate of Babylon and Persia are in this respect types of all their successors, from the daring Parthians to the Huns of Attila, and from Mahomet's victories to those of Tamerlane. Every empire founded

³⁶ HERODOTUS, i. 154.

³⁷ THIRLWALL, Chronological Table of Contents, vols. ii. v.

by nomad tribes, springs up to maturity with tropic haste, almost necessarily. A hardy band of mountaineers find their lowland neighbours easily subdued. Adopting a portion of their more luxurious living, without losing their youthful hardihood, they bethink them of new exploits, and cast wistful glances at further provinces. Accumulating force suggests ever extending hopes of acquisition. Their fame precedes them, and terror pioneers their desolating way. Country after country purchases peace, or is rifled of its treasure. Meanwhile the wants of the turbulent hosts, whereby past victories have been won, require provision. The trampled fields begin to be exhausted, and the soldiery demand to be led onwards. Thus kingdom after kingdom is ridden down; and the intoxicated leader begins to fancy himself fated to become the monarch of the world.

He dies, and his successors born to too much power, and swaddled in the enervating habits of royalty, sooner or later stagger beneath the load of ill cemented empire, and let it fall to pieces. The army may be as numerous to defend as to acquire, but it is the old army of the hills no more. The cool freshness of the gushing

torrent of aggression, has expanded into the muddy, quay-walled, mercenary stream. The sluggish thrift of artificial life has come upon them, without the moral vigour and intelligence of true civilization. As for debilitating luxury, too much stress has I think been generally laid on that; I have not found anything like proofs of the mass of the population of any large empire being thus undone. The great events of history are not to be read by the light of Sardanapalian fires.

But the tents of Japhet resemble not the tents of Shem. In bold relief—like some immutable and immortal group of sculpture, standing before a gorgeous, vast, but ever wavering drapery,—the Greek republics stand upon the margin of the narrow sea, that severs them from the Asian empires.

The development of Greek existence and its manifestation of complete self-adequacy, can hardly be deemed less than the revelation of a new life to man. Think what theretofore his life had been—socially, politically, nationally. Orientalism, under every successive form, had been little more than the attempt to find or to compile a physical weight, heavy enough to hold

mutation down. Greece began her joyous day with a hymn to the Wind. The empires of the east, like giants born in a blind cave, trusted to darkness and brute force, and stumbled over each other's huge forms, as they struggled which of them should have the key, they would fain have turned upon the liberty and progress of mankind. The vitality of Greece lay in her amazing diversity of action. Every pulse in her restless frame kept a time of its own, wholly different from the rest. The monotony whereat all orientalism aimed, could it have been imposed on Greece, would have driven her mad. Not at the price of fabled treasure, could she have been induced to sell her intense and untiring love of action. Energy³⁸—which literally signified the being at work of some sort,—was her morning wish and midnight dream. It took various directions—art, war, commerce, discovery, colonization, wealth, sophistry; but every Greek sympathized with every other man of his race, in the desire and determination to preserve the right and freedom of each to pursue whichever of these he specially preferred.³⁹

³⁸ Ἐνέργεια.

³⁹ See the celebrated speech of Pericles.—THUCYDIDES, ii. 40.

The indistinct and unequal opening of Greek history is invested with a peculiar and characteristic charm. We know, or fancy that we know, who built the City of the Sun;⁴⁰—when we look for the ruins of Babylon, we think of Nabonazar;⁴¹—and our only conception of the beginning of the Persian monarchy is part of the biography of Cyrus. Each sultry day of empire, both before and since, commenced with the brilliant rise of some one self-containing source of lustre and attraction. But none can point out when the eventful day of Grecian life began. As morning breaks, we hear the tears of night still falling heavily and fast; the heavens are still charged with unspent thunders; and fitfully the eddying blast utters its wild sigh. Here and there the clouds open, and the young light laughs in upon this isle, or vale, or hill,⁴² too soon to be withdrawn again, and all but its brief memory effaced by heaven's impenetrable frown. Meanwhile the blue sky clears over other and more fortunate hills;⁴³ and continues bright and

⁴⁰ Heliopolis (or Thebes)—built by king Busiris.—DIODORUS, i. 4.

⁴¹ HEEREN, *Manual of Ancient Hist.* p. 26.

⁴² WACHSMUTH, i. § 29—34.

⁴³ *Idem*, ii. § 57—60

cheerful for a longer time. For none, however, is the natal hour calm, or the spring of day uninterruptedly serene; and out of the crowd of separate and independent city-states,⁴⁴ whose coeval influence on the world and on each other, forms the wondrous history of the land called Greece,—not half a score can be shown to have been cotemporaries.⁴⁵

And in truth, no such country as Greece,—in the vulgar meaning of the phrase, country,—ever existed at all. Neither geographically, or politically, or religiously were the Greeks a nation, in the sense that any other people of antiquity were so. They neither arose at a single leader's call, nor sprung from a single stock,⁴⁶ nor inhabited, during the life-time of a single generation, any rock, or river, or sea-girt home;⁴⁷—at no period were they governed by the same forms of rule;⁴⁸ at no period were they ever one, in public wor-

⁴⁴ The territories possessed by a great number of the self-governments of Greece were much smaller than the estates of the leading English nobility.

⁴⁵ See Chronological Tables in Appendix to MÜLLER's Dorians.

⁴⁶ THIRLWALL, i. 2.

⁴⁷ How much of Asia Minor, and how much of Italy and Sicily was, at any particular period, part of Ancient Greece, cannot even be satisfactorily determined.

⁴⁸ WACHSMUTH,—HERMANN, &c.

ship or domestic rites.⁴⁹ Nonconformity was an instinct of their being; and even in their last days of hopeless ruin, they clung to this privilege still.

What were the Greeks then, and wherein lay the marvellous superiority, whose rays shone forth over all the world, and which, reflected back from the surrounding heights of barbarism, lit up the dwelling places of the Greeks with a national glory, such as earth having once beheld, despairs of again beholding evermore? It seems to me that this—which may well be looked upon as the cardinal fact of profane history—can be accounted for by no curt explication.

'Tis easy to say it was the happy blending of varied races in one matchless combination, that caused all. 'Tis easy to panegyryze the tendency of those political institutions, which though not identical in feature, bear a strong family resemblance to one another, in the various states of Greece. It is not difficult to point out a number of converging influences of neighbourhood and climate, and facilities of intercourse, whose effect no sober minded man will presume to limit

⁴⁹ MÜLLER's Dorians, i. 2.

arbitrarily. But it seems to me wholly impossible to omit any of these considerations. Fusion of various and dissimilar races has been found productive elsewhere of extraordinary power and vigour; why not in Hellas too? Good laws and hereditary freedom have made other nations prosperous, intellectual, and noble-minded; who dares to doubt their efficacy? And modern nations, who begin to be reminded daily of that moral law of capillary attraction, whereby involuntarily they are hourly destined to absorb into their own system, a portion of substances the most remote and foreign thereunto, can hardly question the effect, which early intercourse with mystic Egypt and inventive Tyre must have had in the formation of the Greek character. But whatsoever the creative process may have been, the distinctive beauty, power, and fame of the Greek city-states remains as fresh and fruit-laden to-day, as it was two thousand years ago. We can but inhale a breath or two of their mingled fragrance,—but snatch a tantalizing mouthful from their varied boughs.

And, first of all, the magic of Greek liberty and valour was self-reliance. I do not mean the conviction, wrought arithmetically on the mutual

brains of a million-numbering population, that because they happen to be so many, no enemy is *likely* to assail, or *likely* to subdue them. The Greeks had no idea of bivouacking multitudinous cowardice, in the hope that their foes might mistake the blaze of its camp fires, for the glow of national courage. Greek self-reliance was a temper of the man, taught him in childhood, cherished in youth, brought into exercise by every institution that surrounded his manhood, regarded with the gratitude felt towards a long tried friend in his declining years. Self-reliance was to the Greek no mere sentiment; it was a necessary of life to him. If he could not help himself out of danger, he must sink there; for he had no master to take care of him, no man to help him unless he was worth helping.

So with the sovereign town he dwelt in. It relied upon itself. It had grown up by the stream's side, without any body's aid; it had manufactured a wall-coat for itself, without any body's leave. Such magistrates as it felt it wanted, and could afford to pay, it would have, and none others: and they should be called by what titles it fancied, and by none else. It too had its friends and allies, by whom, like most of

us, it was as often harmed as served. But its confidence was within itself. Plataea, with its town-park territory,⁵⁰ had as high a heart to beard the Persian when he came,⁵¹ as haughty and populous Lacedæmon.⁵²

The Greeks, were moreover, in a high degree an idealizing people. The belief in a future life was no idle dream with them; still less was it a mere vague notion of capricious destiny, which would award to each one bliss or anguish in another world. They had systematized, according to their own ideas of justice, a whole poetic code of retribution.⁵³ Law—or the expression of what was eternally right and true—they believed to be paramount to all prerogatives of their divinities. Zeus himself could not overthrow, they thought, the universal harmony of justice; and while they subordinated the minor powers of spirit to his authority, they placed this immutable law of right above all.⁵⁴

When these two mainstays of Greek life were

⁵⁰ PAUSANIAS, ix. 1.

⁵¹ HERODOTUS, vi. 108.

⁵² MÜLLER'S Dorians, i. 4, 9.

⁵³ WACHSMUTH, i. 13.

⁵⁴ HERMANN, 55.

loosed, they were brought quickly to destruction. In the day they looked to foreign arms and gold for political security, they fell, to rise erect no more. When the sophists had quibbled them out of their religious feelings, all other idealisms vanished too; and they ceased to understand why men should hazard any present or sensual enjoyment for fame, which was matter of opinion,—for honour, which was difficult to define,—for country, which was after all a mere geographical prejudice,—for Heaven, which nobody could prove to mathematical demonstration had any existence.

How the vanity of Sparta and of Athens, aiming under opposite pretexts at unionizing and imperializing the dissimilar states of Greece, hastened the catastrophe,—and how the suicidal spirit of party, called into being by their rivalry, gradually extinguished the national spirit, is only to be understood by a deep and meditative study of that portion of ancient history.

There is nothing in the whole range of history, that has so often caused me to feel disappointment, as the total loss of the native records of Carthage. Looking at it in every point of view, I think this the greatest want

we have in our historical collections. Up and down the field of Greek and Latin literature, there lie many fragments of that singular and romantic tale ;—enough to awaken and to tantalize our curiosity, but not enough to satisfy our enquiries.⁵⁵ It has sometimes struck me, that were all these collected and restored with care, much would look out of these mutilated forms more than we now dream of. But the man who from these could give us any idea of the ancient, once unrivalled gem of the sea,—must be more than a mere sapper or miner. His hopes of his task should grow with the expanding aspirations of the fugitive state. He must look over the wave from the Lybian shore—not from the Latin. His sympathies must be Carthaginian, not Roman,—his memories must be of the land of milk and honey, whence the ancestors of his heroes sprang—not of the Etrurian plains or Alban hills.

All we know of Carthage is intensely interesting. Her beginning is a romance; her growth an epic; her constitution, when in her

⁵⁵ "Carthage is to us a dumb actor on the stage of history."
ARNOLD: *Hist: Rome*: ii. 39.

full prime, one thoroughly peculiar and indigenous, but indicating the deepest rooted love of liberty; her contests with her mighty rival the most notable in history; her death-struggles, when beaten back to her lair; the most sublime on record. Yet are her annals vacant. Save the incredible falsehoods of her murderers⁵⁶ and those who fawned on them,—men who dared not do her justice, who could make no money of being just to her,—we have few facts relative to her fate. And to her institutions, the best guide we have is that sentimentalist without a heart, king Philip's Aristotle.

Even Aristotle, in his own stately patronizing way, gives Carthage ample credit for national spirit, self-reliant pride, and well ordered freedom. But there is one circumstance mentioned by him worthy of peculiar remembrance, which those solemn burlesques on history, that we are usually referred to as containing the biography of Carthage, wholly omit to mention, or notice parenthetically, as if there were not time to dwell thereon. "The worth of her government,"

⁵⁶ See the error of Livy (xxxiii. 46.) about the Carthaginian Judges.—ARISTOTLE, *Polit.* ii. 135. Note.

says the old Stagyrice doctor of laws, "is tested by a single fact. Although within a narrow bosom it has held for centuries a busy, thronging, and quite free people, yet has Carthage never been subjected to popular anarchy, nor been driven to the protection of a dictator."⁵⁷ What a reflection! What a satiric contrast and commentary on Rome! on Greece herself! Here is the very marrow of her system,—the life spot of her being; yet this is what the mock-history mongers throw out—clear away—get rid of,—that they may polish the dry bones—the dead facts of her fate.

For many generations Carthage seems to have enjoyed as much happiness, as the existence of a domesticated slave class, and the rites of an inexorable false worship, would allow her. This sin of slavery is the plague spot upon the fairest forms of ancient liberty. 'Tis every where. Not the abuse, not the excessive cruelty alone, but the mute unconsciousness of its being wrong or evil. And the bloodthirsty ritual of Moloch being added thereunto, must have had a fatally perverting ten-

⁵⁷ Polit: ii. 11.

dency. Conceive what England would have been, had human sacrifices still continued to be recognised by her people, as a solemn means of testifying her homage of the Supreme?

But Carthage knew no better way. Infanticide grew rare as civilization expanded. Was it not wondrous how it struggled up into strong life at all, amid such a jungle of superstition!

The turning point of Carthaginian power is that where she takes to successful gambling: mind, to successful gambling; no other is of the fatal kind. Those who, lured by that invention of the great enemy of nations, as of individual men, have tried and been well fleeced at first, are generally saved. They get their warning, that the path is a treacherous one, in time; and they go back to honest industry, and say repentantly—"give me neither poverty or riches, least I be poor and steal, or take the name of a forgotten God in vain." National avarice—the covetousness of thy neighbour's goods—whether it assume the form of open force or overreaching cunning—whether its gold be burnished with the brave man's blood, or the timid sufferer's tears—whether it be

wrenched from a neighbour, or stolen from a friend—is eternally accursed. Get it—clutch it—store it—hug it—double it—treble it—hire a world of mercenaries to guard it—watch it—worship it—and after all, 'twill leave thee—or will be a millstone round thy neck, to drag thee downward to perdition.

The fate of nations has been as various as their names; the attempt to draw them into Procrustean parallels is vain; but there are some universal truths, and this is one of them, which all experience testifies unto—that from the hour a people, no matter how or under what pretences, begins to depend upon the unearned wealth of others—the unnative arms of others—the factitious patriotism of others—the skein of its fate begins to be wound up—fatally. The more Carthage hastened to grow rich, the more rapidly do we perceive her institutions hastening to decay. Wealth became the chief qualification for power or influence. Great public offices were purchased. Monopoly abroad, became the instigator of monopoly at home. Carthage was irresponsibly great: let those who led Carthage to such

greatness⁵⁸ be in like manner irresponsible as men. The people were kept in a whirl of excitement, triumph, wonder, foreign news, and victory. National vanity jostled the calm honest love of country from its old place in the popular heart. The many were blinded by the dazzling novelty of remote commerce and possessions; they thought of them, and dreamt of them, till they could think and dream of nothing else. They reeled on till the end of the second Punic war, when with fearful shock they were awakened to a sense of their infatuation: the Roman eagle sat upon their panting bosom, and seemed to ponder whether it would spare them even life.⁵⁹

Life for that time was spared. They put away for a season the wine cup of folly; as by miracle the palsied hand grew steady; the heated brain grew cool; we will drink no more—'tis madness, infatuation; let us pay off the debts we owe—the improvident contracts of our delirium;—by treaty Rome exacts a bitter and extortionate fine, calculated as she herself avows, on the

⁵⁸ Aristotle describes very indistinctly the origin and duties of the *Πενταρχαί*; but it is generally supposed that they were what with us are called the Ministry—holding power for no determined period, and virtually responsible rather to their party than to the state.

⁵⁹ POLYBIUS, xv. 2.

principle of keeping us always in her power ;— we will baffle her malignity ; come back, honest toil and thrift, too long neglected friends— forgotten counsellors,—guide us again !⁶⁰

There is not in history a more touching or sublime spectacle, than a nation thus sobered by adversity, and under the leadership of one great man, penitently reverting to the principles and practices of virtue. We are taught to think of Hannibal as a mere general ; this is the back of the picture, where his worst deeds are scrawled. But the greatness and glory of Hannibal is that he kept up the fainting heart of his country after her fall ; that laying by the vulgar fame of war, he became the comforter and guide of his sick and wounded people ; that he taught them the great lessons of self-reform—reform of their moral and economical condition. And such was his success, that by thrift and searching abolition of all waste in the expenditure of the public money, the national debt was within ten years discharged, to the surprise and mortification of Rome. This is the praise of Hannibal.

But he strove in vain. The people were re-

⁶⁰ LIVY, xxxiii. 46, 47.

claimable, but the aristocracy had become corrupt. Stript of their power by his influence, they entered into the pay of Rome. Habits of indolent expense had spoiled them; their good feelings were warped; they plotted against Hannibal; to save his life, he was compelled to fly; Rome came again, resolved that this time there should be no mercy shown: Carthage ceased to be.

With some exceptions, I do not conceive it to be of very great importance, what foreign country's history you read first. The prevalent notion seems to be, that that of ancient Rome is about the best to begin with. This seems to me a very serious and practically mischievous error. Far from giving precedence to the life of that too celebrated Jack Shephard of the nations, I am sure that it may and ought to be postponed to many others. The tendency of Roman history, as it is to be found in most of the popular versions hitherto in use amongst us, is grossly and permanently demoralizing. For what is its distinctive feature? Not surpassing bravery, for the Greeks were certainly as brave; not the romance of its origin, for that of Carthage was more singular; not the lustre of its arts and literature, for it was

the slavish copyist of Greece. The grand and dazzling characteristic is successful force,—force unwaveringly devoted through the lapse of ages to one aim and end,—earth's subjugation!⁶¹

The history of Rome is the biography of the longest lived and most accomplished ruffian, that has ever played the part of plunderer and bully among the nations; and I am persuaded that there is more soul-depressing doubt as to man's capacity for freedom, and more direct suggestions to political immorality, inhaled from the narrative of Roman impunity, than from all the other chronicles of mankind. Vices as great and as varied are to be found elsewhere; violence as fraudulent, and treachery more consummate, may be pointed out in Pagan—aye, and alas! in pseudo-Christian times: but no where did these things, concatenated through the lapse of ages, assert so daring an irresponsibility from all law of retributive justice,—for none other of the many, who in various climes have striven to clutch the unhallowed spoil, have won and kept the diadem of the world!

⁶¹ POLYBIUS, xv. 1.

Now, when you are learning astronomy, you do not begin with studying the track and dimensions of the great comet, which appeared but once, and which nobody hopes to behold again. If astronomy had nothing more beautiful to reveal, or more practically useful to tell us than that, we might safely allow it to lie unstudied, indeed we should almost be bound to do so. It would still have its curious worth; it would still repay enquiry, if one had time. But life is short, and "to do" is its proper business; and as what we want from science, is a guide to our travelling feet, so that which we want from history, is a lamp for our national path. Our practical need is not of the glare of the signal exception, but of the calm lustre shed by the rule.

The idea of Rome was domination. For this she seems to have been born;⁶² in the impulsive consciousness of this she grew, beyond the bounds of all precedent or parallel; for sake of this, was her sanguinary code of social and public discipline constructed and maintained,⁶³ for upwards of eight hundred years. Her first exploit was the destruction of her own parent—

⁶² ARNOLD, ii. 38.

⁶³ HEEREN, *Manual of Ancient Hist.* i. 4.

Alba;⁶⁴ her last, the transference of the seat of her world empire to Constantinople, whereby she committed suicide; and the life-interval between this fit beginning, and characteristic end, is thoroughly consistent. Every footprint in her track is deep with blood. Her philosophy assumed, and offered to demonstrate at the sword's point, that the strongest government is the best. Her plea for each act of war was the attainment of general peace,—a plea which the minor practitioners of later times have not seldom adopted, as a precedent for their petty larcenies. Rome asserted boldly that the annihilation of all independent rule, and thought, would be the perfectest condition of things; and her perseverance wrought upon this anvil, with more than mortal energy, for upwards of a thousand years. Her empire stretched the nearest to the attainment of this aim, of any that has ever been; and there are those, who think it pity, that the experiment was not at least thoroughly tried out, imagining that the terrific ruin into which the imperialized portion of the world afterwards fell, was the effect of incomplete success.

⁶⁴ LIVY, i. 26, &c.

They forget that the end sought, was itself the one all-accounting cause of the great evil. The philosophy of Rome was impious and unnatural. Look at it naked; was it not this—a project for getting rid of the wind;—a plan for putting down storms,—for enacting stagnation in God's gustful atmosphere. There were constant wars and rumours of war between independent states, and much inequality and nonconformity among nations. Well? Let us make unto us therefore, one great imperial screw, that shall abolish all independent will, and hold fast at the level of a centralised civilization, all passions, ambitions, laws, and thoughts of men. Unhappy blasphemy! God did not make the world for this, or fashion us to inhabit such a world. Were such attainable, which assuredly it is not, it seems to me that 'twere the worst and most unendurable of all conditions. Uniform level! Oh, my God, thou never wilt abandon us to that! The curse at the Garden gate is heavy enough, but it is light and easy when compared with this. 'Tis often hard to dig and sweat for bread; but to be sure of bread without digging,—to have nothing to dig for,—that were indeed perdition, rayless, irredeemable. Ah, no, my friends. Na-

ture is not uniform, and our whole spiritual frame, exquisitely adapted as it is to the action of the external world, is utterly unfit for mere certainty and quiescence. The sky without its clouds, the sea without its swells, vegetation without regenerative decay, youth without old age, light without shade, joy without sorrow, life without fear, or doubt, or uncertainty, were,—with the temper, and the yearnings, and the passions, and the capacities we have, and cannot cease to have,—not a state of beatitude, but the most loathsome and maddening of dooms.

The master notion of Rome, therefore, was a blunder; and the world suffered, not because it was imperfectly carried out in practice, but because it was carried out so far. Every crammed fool of a boy can write an exercise, on the advantages of Roman roads, and discipline, and language, to the uncivilized tribes of Asia, Gaul, Pannonia, and the Isles; but where can he steal well turned periods in lament over the trampled, lost, unannalled virtues, legends, dialects, inventions, manners, laws—of all these decimated nations? The artificial benefits conferred were chronicled by the givers; panegyric makes its livelihood of the profusion, which great

success only can afford ; but who shall tell what indigenous good the triumphant intruders have supplanted ? The self praise of victory — its merits, when there are any, are immortalised ; but have we heard the wail of the vanquished ? Who shall guide us to the unepitaphed graves of the undone ?

With a fine sense of this, Niebuhr, in his own sceptic way, sighs over the success of Rome. “ In the progress of events, when the Roman “ conquests are consolidated into one mass, the “ history loses all the moral and poetic interest of “ the earlier centuries. It seems to be the course “ of the world’s history, that conquests and divers “ intermixtures are to fuse the numberless original races together, and to extirpate those that “ refuse to be amalgamated : this the Roman “ domination did more widely and thoroughly “ than any other. But seldom will any individual race gain by such a change. Some of the “ incorporated nations suffer the irreparable loss “ of a national literature, science, or civilization. “ Even a less cultivated people will hardly find “ that refinements thus imported—which if really “ suited to its inherent genius, it might have won “ of itself,—make any amends for the forfeiture

“ of its own language, its national history and
“ traditionary institutions * * * * But
“ it is vain to talk now of what might have been,
“ and idle to mourn over the unreplaced and
“ irreplaceable treasures, which the Romanized
“ nations lost : neither shall we ask, whether the
“ richest crop of good that after ages have
“ reaped,⁶⁵ can compensate for the sufferings of
“ down trodden generations.”

Niebuhr writes of Roman history, and shrinks from asking the one question above all else worth asking in it ; it is characteristic of a man whose heart was broken by the news of an unlooked for revolution.⁶⁶ But it seems to me that if you cannot, or you will not ask yourselves such questions, you had better not mind troubling yourselves with the study of history. I only say, “ *ask* yourselves such questions.” ’Tis in the asking that the use lies chiefly, the self-asking—and the earnest searching for the right answer. As for the answer itself, I have more faith in the everlasting rightfulness of mankind’s intuitive perception and judgment, than to stand

⁶⁵ Through the universality of the Latin language, which afforded such peculiar facilities to the revival of learning in the middle ages.

⁶⁶ That of 1830 in France.

shivering with fear about that. Go,—make out, every man of you, his own solution of the question, and my wishes for you will be attained.

You wont agree, I know: well, and what then? Do you suppose that, if by any subtle conjury I could wheedle you into unanimity on the point, and congeal your intellects, so that by no after action of your minds, you would ever be able to waver from the truth, (for it might be the truth)—I lent you—that I would use such an elixir of conformity? By my love of truth and freedom—no. I have no conception of such being other than wholly artificial, false, and unsound. I wish you to get ideas for yourselves; mine them out of the great quarry for yourselves; weld and mint them for yourselves, and put your own image and superscription on them, and then they will be a wealth unto ye inexhaustible;—"they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of your hand." But trust no other mortal riches, if at the end you would not die bankrupt. To use and study history, you must live the action of it over again in your own heads and hearts. This is the only way to get a hold of and appropriate the good that is in the thing. *It*—the narrative—somebody's

version of how certain events fell out, and his guess at, or calumny of, the motives that impelled the actors on a particular scene,—all this is but the undug, unappropriated, uncurrent ore ; were it the purest gold, of what good in that state is it to you ?

VI.

MODERN HISTORY.

“ Thus everything in history is transitory; the inscription on her temple is decay. Ancient kingdoms rise a moment from their graves, and glide before us over history’s field. Who does not shudder when in the daily round of life, he stumbles over the graves where the ruins of their institutions lie entombed? And after the present race have cleared away the catacombs of their fathers, how soon will its own institutions, even like theirs, crumble into dust? “ “ “ We fancy ourselves independent; yet we are dependent upon all that has been and that is;—we are implicated in a chain of endless fluctuation. A slender thread connects together all generations, which is ever breaking to be tied anew. Year runs into year, and empire into empire !”¹

HERDER.

Our perplexity in attempting to survey ancient history, arose from there being so little to be known of it; the embarrassment of modern history is caused by there being so much. Our task in the field of antiquity, was to follow the illuding stream, and if possible to detect its fountain. Our attention in modern times, is distracted by the brawling of separate, yet closely neighbouring currents, none of whose origins we have leisure to enquire for accurately, and many of whose interminglings, not here or there, but

¹ Philosophy of History, xv. 1.

almost every where, baffles the most critical and experienced ken.

When we trod the road of early dawn, we marked each haughty wayfarer as he issued forth of his natal glen; we had time to examine his bearing,—to hear his account of himself,—to note his marauding demeanour,—to hazard a guess as to what he did with his plunder, while, for his appointed season, he lorded it ruthlessly on Time's highway. By and bye, we saw a new and younger rival dart forth and suddenly beset his path;—we beheld them struggling for pre-eminence—for life; who shall have the prey?—the real owners daring not to ask for it;—*they* appear as claimants, nowhere. This is the impression left on us by the greater part of antiquity, as its chief terrors passed us on that dark mountain road. But we now approach the fair green. It is broad day. The sun of national liberty is up; and the busy kingdoms of the earth,—as in the market place of civilization,—throng and bustle there,—tolerating no single handed browbeater any more,—not dreaming indeed of such; but occupied with infinite variety of traffic, novelty, interchange of ideas, comparison, differences of opinion, discussion, party squabbles, and

short-lived animosity or friendship. Permanence,—the very look of permanence,—is gone. Change is the order of the day. So quick are the mutations grown, that if you let go the hand of one whom you knew and understood perfectly, and in a little while come to look for him, he is not to be recognised or found. His garb has been altered so in the interval, that in vain you seek him by the exterior signs once familiar to your eye; or he has departed wholly from the place he occupied, and it knoweth his voice no more.

Just look at the shufflings and eludings, our own generation has been witness to. Fifteen years ago, Greece was a province of the Ottoman Porte; it is now an independent and acknowledged kingdom.² Fifteen years ago, Spain was a dumb dotard-ridden slave crib,—unutterably desponding, feeble, and effete;³ it is now fast rising into constitutional rights, and putting on the long disused dignities of a great nation. Fifteen years ago, the kingdom of the Netherlands was

² The first general outbreak against the constituted authorities, was in June, 1822: the treaty of London, by which the Five Powers recognised Greek independance, was signed 6th July, 1827.—KEIGHTLEY: *Revolution in Greece*.—F. STRONG: *Greece as a kingdom*: 1842.

³ See *A year in Spain*, by a young American; 1830: &c.

in tranquil being;⁴ it is now no more; and out of its dismemberment two separate powers have risen, or rather re-arisen; for, whom God hath not joined together, man may and will put asunder. Fifteen years ago, France was governed by the lineal heir of Louis XIV. pluming himself on his ancestral right of rule, and his having out-riden those tremendous storms, wherein so many of his kindred had gone down. Poor, false-confident, old hull of royalty!—doomed since then, to drift with light freight from thy deceitful moorings of legitimacy;—doomed to founder finally on the exile rock of Grätz—forgotten and obscure! Fifteen years ago, the crescent shone over the plains watered by the Volga and the Don; they are now the fattening yards of the White Eagle.⁵ Fifteen years ago, an old Moor sat on the divan of Algiers, sipping sherbet, and believing in the power of the Arabian prophet to keep him and his successors there, safe in their pirate den, for ever. The credulous old moslem and his christian brother Charles X. are both sent to wander in far exile. Sight-loving Europe

⁴ C. GRATTAN: *Hist. Netherlands*.—C. WHITE: *Account of the Belgian Revolution*.

⁵ *Russia under Nicholas I.* translated from the German, by Captain A. STERLING, 1841.

looks over her shoulder at them for a moment, without pity, and goes on her bustling way. Meanwhile the Algerine divan is turned into a French *salon*; and the Koran is replaced by Voltaire. Still greater changes have come upon us, in these fifteen years. America stood then full forty days away from us;—we have changed positions, and are come within nine or ten. Fifteen years ago, the golden Islands of the West were so many gaols, for kidnapped Africans to toil out life in, for Europe's guilty gain:—thank God, the prison walls are broken down; and the African is beginning to own, as free occupying tenant, the soil so lately furrowed by the lash-let blood of his race. One doubt of the eternity of evil is extinguished.

And thus it is, that to keep pace with the contemporary history of our day, is come to be one of the most onerous duties of statesmen, so numerous are the objects of distinct and novel interest grown,—so rapid the mutations of the oldest and most stable looking institutions of society.

Think only of this,—that there are men still living, who recollect America—both North and South—regarded politically as little better than waste ground to Europe, a sort of common, over

parts of which, claims of ownership were every now and then asserted, in the way of royalties and so forth, as it was wanted;⁶ but from end to end of which there did not, seventy years ago, exist one single spot not tributary to this quarter of the world. Look at it now. Beside the mighty Commonwealth of the North, there are Mexico, Peru, Columbia, Brazil, Chili, Venezuela, Texas, Hayti,—all of them independent, and several of them free and prosperous, states.

The histories of antiquity rise slowly, as we have seen, out of the silent mist that primævally lay upon all things, as an impenetrable veil. Modern annals date from that world storm, which as a besom of destruction swept for centuries the decayed civilization of the Roman empire. The history of that storm, or rather histories of the fast-following tempests, from the first Vandal outburst in the Third century, till the last rush of the Normans in the Tenth,—when they shall be written as they ought to be written, with a

⁶ In a letter of Jefferson's, dated 22nd April, 1786, and written from London, whither he had been sent to negotiate a commercial treaty by the young Republic, there is this curious anecdote: "I dined the other day in a company of the Ministerial party; General Clark, a Scotchman and a Ministerialist, sat next to me. He told me, that were America to petition Parliament to be again received on their former footing, the

perception of their unity of end,—for there was assuredly a certain unity in them,—a key-note of unison in their dissonant howls,—will form perhaps one of the most magnificent chronicles of human fate and conflict, of which we can have a conception. I have said, when it shall be written ; for surely the glittering philosophistries of Gibbon will appear no adequate representation of the matter, if you but think seriously what its depth—its space—its mysterious, dark, soul-quelling impulses were. Gibbon was a clever, an exceeding clever man ; but cleverness will not do for work like this. He was a nimble, shrewd, indefatigable, critical-witted man ; but neither are these the qualities chiefly requisite for such an undertaking. He had a keen eye out for the opportunity to turn an epigram ; and as for antitheses, his brain was a hot house in which they grew all the year round. But the composition of true history is aided little by a profusion of these kinds of forced fruit, curious

petition would be very generally rejected. He was serious in this ; I think it was the sentiment of the company, and is perhaps the sentiment of the nation. In this they are wise, but for a foolish reason. They think they lost more by suffering us to participate in their commercial privileges, than they lose by our political severance." Correspondence, ii. p. 2.

and costly though they be. Ah! no. Gibbon lived, longed, aspired, attempted, worked, slaved hard, wrote, published—and he was flattered, praised, read, bought, republished, perched up for immortality in stucco and in stone;—and yet did he go down to the grave profoundly unaware, incurably unqualified to understand what this wreck of civilization was, whereon he has so elaborately pin-picked his name.

'Twas the solemnest epoch in the lifetime of man—that, when the civilization of two thousand years,—unionized into one gigantic fabric by the power of Rome, so that the whole trust and worth of nations was by compulsion made to rest thereon⁷—began visibly to break down. 'Twas the sultriest hour of time. The sweat-drops of terror fell, and made echo in their fall. The loosing of the chariot-steeds of barbarism was heard afar, and men knew not what it meant, for they had never heard the like before. Vague feelings of their helplessness and danger—vague forebodings of unknown evils overcast their sapless hearts. They had time to fly—but whither? They had hands and brains, but the hands were nerveless,

⁷ “Rome had destroyed the balance of nations; and under her care the world had nearly bled to death.” HERDER, *Phil. of Hist.* xv. 5.

and “the formidable *pilum*, which had subdued the world, dropt from them;”⁸—the brains were crammed full of controversial logic, so that there was no room in them for manly thoughts. Men had been bent and bowed for centuries to believe the lie, that one arch of power is enough for all mankind,—that it is safest and best for many nations to trust all to one. All rivalry or competition was not only dead, but it was a thing forgotten; it had come to be a rude, uncivilized, unenlightened thing. There stood but one world spanning arch,—but one only tolerated or known bridge over anarchy. Suddenly the waters rise, surge high, swell beyond all ordinary bounds; the antiquated masonry is giving way; battlement after battlement falls in; help! —help!—we perish! But there is no help: only a too late consciousness is heard whispering—ye have cut away all other arches—all other ways of escape, save this one of empire: —crowned kings of men, ye too must even perish!

⁸ GIBBON: Decline and Fall of Roman Empire, xxvii.—Before the end of the fourth century, the infantry found the helmet and cuirass, which their fathers had worn, too heavy for their degenerate strength, and obtained permission to disuse them.—Idem.

Downward it totters,—crumbles down, with its multitudinous load. They sink wailing, sink with whatever they possess of valuables—valuables as they called them; and doubtless dragging with them much also of true value into the unwritten grave. Yet is not *all* lost. Christianity remained a refuge for the drowning civilization of antiquity. The church sank not.⁹ Since the unannalled days of the first flood, when the primitive science, art, and knowledge of mankind were destroyed, there had been naught within comparison so appalling to the unsheltered world as this Scythian tide; and, as in the elder tempest, there was no salvation but in an ark of safety of no human providence or contriving. The church alone outrode the storm. When its surging crest of ruin rose most high, the cross rose with it, and above it still. The barbarians embraced christianity; and when the vanquished felt that between them and their conquerors there was one tie, that of a com-

⁹ “It was the Christian church, that alone could hope to weather so fierce a storm, that struggled against the barbarian, and in fact overcame the barbarian; it was the Christian church that became the great connecting link between the civilization of the Roman and the barbarian world.”—GURZOR: *Civilization in Europe*, ii.

mon faith,—they said within themselves, “surely the bitterness of death is passed.”

It was the church that saved whatever could be rescued from the universal wreck; in her sanctuary were preserved for subsiding times, the laws, and a few hastily snatched up records of a drowned antiquity. On, on, with force as if for ever, the gush of Scythia and Burgundia roars. All political power is overwhelmed in its weltering wave. The church alone sinks not. It alone presumes to beard and to reprove—to rebuke and to restrain its rage. Immortal faith saves human hope from dying. All this is assuredly no scoffing matter. Sceptic sarcastic Gibbon was no man to write its history: when next it shall be written, pray that it may fall into far different hands.

Can we imagine anything so crushing of all hope of progress, as the state of things that would have been, had antiquity been entirely lost? Can we conceive a more exalting proof of a superintending wisdom in the affairs of men, than the provision whereby religion was made to guard that perilled treasure? Let us recollect that had the Christian era fallen five centuries later, no common ground of mercy or of pity

would have been found at the invasion of Italy; and thus the experience of the whole period, from the records of Moses down to Justinian, would be now a guess field or a blank. That human nature would have created its work anew, we doubt not; but the difference to us this day had been immeasurable.

When there was no longer any field to overrun, the wild races of the North began to localise themselves in the territories they had severally conquered. In Spain and Southern France the Visigoths founded independent realms. In Italy the Lombards were predominant; Germany was distributed among the Franks and Suevi; England fell to the Saxons and Anglians; while Poland and Hungary were settled by the Ostrogoths and Huns. Last of all came the sea-kinged Northmen or Normans, the only tribe whose excursions in quest of booty or new dwellings, were of a maritime character. Normandy, Scotland, England, Sicily, and finally Ireland became obedient to their sway. The rude branches reft thus from their northern stock, in almost every instance struck deep and lasting root, in the too ready Celtic soils of the west and south; and changing wholly the udal character they had

aboriginally borne, there gradually arose therefrom the numerous and powerful feudal states of Europe.

Feudalism, like most other terms in the catalogue of modern history, is not easily defined. It assumed very different forms, and in truth acted on very different principles, in different places. It changed its purport also with the growth of society, at very unequal speed in different countries. But it may suffice here to say that in its beginning the idea of feudalism was—the law of military occupation. As the possessions of the chief were won by force, it was natural that his first care in laying down the sword, was to have it always near at hand to be snatched up for defence. The fields were ravaged the first year, but the next they required to be sown. “Sow them, my brave soldiers! ye have risked life and limb for them; I have been your *duc*¹⁰ (as these craven Latins call me) your *könning*,¹¹ as ye say: at all events I have led you thus far; stand by me, and I will protect you. Hold these lands at

¹⁰ Dux (Duke) was the title borne by the military governors of provinces under the Romans. The Franks adopted the name, and afterwards it spread all over Feudal-dom.

¹¹ “Able-man,—Can-ning,—King.”—See CARLYLE, on Hero-worship, vi.

my pleasure, or during my life. I am lord of this riven soil; it is for you to till it, for me and for yourselves. Pay me that homage still which you have heretofore done, and give me hunting grounds and game; and if any man molests you, come to me for retribution. As for the old occupiers, let them thank God that they are still allowed to live, under merciful conquerors; let them not stray from their villages and manors; you can use them for labourers in the land." What is more natural than all this? What is it but the spontaneous resource of men, finding themselves without any regular form of authority of rule, improvising a strong law adapted to their immediate wants? We have here the great fundamental institutions of lordship of the soil, of free tenants owing fealty to the lord, and of the serfs, *adscripti glebæ*, who were looked on as an inferior race, and who—in the sense that the free tenants had property and privileges—could hardly be said to be left any rights at all.

The great purpose of this subordination was defence. Its gradations were at first of course capriciously irregular; but by degrees more of system was adopted. Rights acquired as these had been, were felt to have no other guarantee

than the same force which had created them. It was requisite that the followers of the chief thus quartered on the usurped lands, should be bound to do military service in defence of their common title. New hordes were hungrily pressing on from behind ; in front a new and fearful competitor,—in all respects a match for the best of the Gothic soldiers—the Saracens threatened hard. Year after year the strife was uninterrupted ; to maintain possession they had as much, nay more need of discipline and valour, than to win themselves a settlement. Fealty, which was the feudal name for reverence, homage, loyalty, was thus an instinct of life, not a mere duty imposed and admitted. Without it, no man felt that he was safe. In war, a leader—a duke or count, was indispensable for sake of all ; and feudal life was scarce interrupted war. Thus fealty or loyalty to a superior grew intense,—became a condition of existence—a passion in the young, a principle among the old.

From the very nature of this impulse, and the state of society at the time, the authority which the feudal chieftain assumed, grew daily more and more absolute. He was lord of the soil—judge of the court—executioner of the sentence,

because he was captain in the field; and all men's being then was spent in preparing for the fray, or recruiting after its exhaustion. Appeal there was and could be none. To whom should the wronged appeal? We hear of kings and emperors in those days; but, in the sense we use the title, sovereigns there then were none. Seven tribes joined in the incursion under the name of Franks, and had in battle an appointed *könning*. But when the struggle was over, each clan reverted to its count or duke for protection and guidance. The *könning* of the Franks looks at this distance like a king of France; but *grande monarque* he was none; and all the fond pretensions to suzerainty over his peers—his *fellow* chieftains, grew up slowly, and in a thousand instances imperceptibly, and assumed not tangible or formidable shape, till feudalism itself was on the wane.

But there were two powers which, once the first shock was over, rapidly recovered strength and vigour, and which watching their opportunity, and how they might take advantage of the continual embroilments of the feudal lords,—soon attained to independence. These were the clergy, and the burghers of the walled towns.

Of the former I shall say but little, least my motives should possibly be misconstrued. The time for such discussions as the history of the church must give rise to, has I think hardly yet arrived in Ireland. I might tell you many interesting truths, which ought to offend neither sect or party; but I feel that I have your confidence, and I will not hastily risk its continuance. 'Tis not my fault,—'tis not yours perhaps—that your temper has been brought to that state, wherein you cannot bear to hear many subjects spoken of which it concerns you to understand. For me, I think it no light matter—'tis a gratification I shall never cease to feel, that in a state of society so wounded and so sore as this of ours in Ireland, you have borne with me good humouredly thus far:—that you have suffered one coming to you with no authority, no credentials, and few prejudices in his favour,—to set before you in all truth and honesty, many things which both sides have heretofore been taught to look upon as contraband. I am glad—glad for your sakes as well as for my own,—that these lectures upon history have been listened to by so many of each sect and party. Poor and scanty as the mental fare has been which I have set before you, I trust it has been

yet enough to prove that you are fit for better and other things, than hitherto you have been put off with. We have talked here together openly upon history, its use and study; it is not likely after this night that you and I shall converse upon this theme. You will easily find better, abler, wiser guides; I shall have served my humble turn, and have other work to do. Yet one thing I would ask you ere we part, do any of you feel less love of country—less love of God—less love of one another, on account of anything I have bid you taste of here? And if not—were it not worth your while deeply to consider, whether even in those things that you have most feared to touch, and in those feelings of each other you have most condemned,—there may not be some good?—whether you might not all be happier and better men, and your afflicted land have more pride and hope infused into her sick heart, if you spent, as you have done here, a little more time in calm and earnest searching after truth—truth which all may profitably learn,—and a little less time in tearing to shameful tatters the peculiar tenets you respectively espouse?

I trust you will evince daily more of this spirit,—more of the spirit of those who are come

to the mind's estate of *men*;—that you will grow tired of being any longer captious, fretful, squabbling children. But 'twill take time. You cannot change all things at once. Meanwhile I will not hazard your good will, by introducing such matters as go by the name of ecclesiastical history, in this place. Those matters are indeed most full of deep instruction; and might, I doubt not, be made palatable, aye, most racy to your taste. But “better is a dinner of herbs, where peace and love is, than a stalled ox, and hatred therewith:” so saith the wise man; let us be taught by him. Better for us here—approaching this suspected subject of history, its popular use and study, now almost for the first time, I believe, in this country—to be contented with a limited or half portion of it,—than to run the risk, in the eager attempt to come at once at *all*, of evoking again the accursed spirit of sectarian, I call it not *religious* discord,—that spirit we should by all means strive to lay. The time *will* come—'tis coming fast, when all such fears and caution need no further log us. We will then go forth fetterless in the spirit of generous enquiry, to tread all paths—this one of church history

among the rest ; but for the present, I look upon its path as barred, and I shall not break the fence within which I have undertaken to stand.

But we may safely ask the other question, what did the municipalities of the middle ages do towards the reconstruction of civilized society ?

How far the condition of the mass of the rural population was physically worsened by feudalism, it is hard to say. There are high authorities for the assertion,¹² that at the breaking up of the Roman empire, the labouring agricultural classes were as completely serfs, or rather more so, than under the Gothic lords of the soil and freeholding middlemen. But certain it is, that in Italy, Germany, and Switzerland, the artizans and burghers were the first to avail themselves, of the casual wants and weakness of their turbulent lords ; and the first to see, that rallying round the ancient ruins of the old Roman municipalities, which never had been wholly destroyed, they might secure for their towns the inestimable benefits of local order and law.

¹² MURATORI, HALLAM, SISMONDI.

The chief means of achieving these ends, was at once the cause and consequence of the reviving spirit of civilization. Industry had no where to sit and spin, save within the walled towns. The turbulent barons were ever wanting money, and never very scrupulous in their means of obtaining it. The timid trader viewed the powerful baron with jealousy and distrust ; and he in turn watched the growing wealth of the citizen with a covetous eye. The terrors of the industrious burgher were two-fold. He feared the rapacity of strange chieftains, and the exactions of his own local lord. Against the stranger he had no protection. *His* property was not land. Land was the great object of defence. It was called *real* property, and it was so, for it was really hard to steal, and really well defended. All other property was called chattle or moveable—moveable enough in those times. The freehold tenant could not be beggared, save by being deprived of his land ; and this could not be done by a strange chief, without insulting and making war upon the land-lord—the lord of the soil or land. So the freeholder of land had this protection. But the poor trader of the town had nothing but his re-moveables—his chattles,

whereof, as he had no account to give to his lord, but was the entire and sole owner of them, his lord took little care. Remember there was no police, because there was no supreme administration—nothing answering to what we call *government*, in those days.

Well then; the people of the towns had this terror of intrusion from strangers; and likewise the terror of exaction from their local lords, to whom feudally they belonged. I do not mean to say that all feudal chiefs were extortioners. I do not know that they were; and I quite believe that, even from the bleared and war-seamed face of early feudalism, there often looked out a sense of justice and humanity. I never saw the hard rock yet, that some green flowery thing would not grow upon. It was looked on, probably, as unnatural, for the lord to rob his vassal—or the vassal to desert his lord. There was a deep meaning—a strong common sense of mutuality and reciprocity in these rude institutions; it is a shallow thought to imagine that they could have stood so long in the world, if there were not.

But the burgher was less felt to be a vassal—felt himself to be less so,—than the holder of

land. He stood in a different position. What he had—all he valued—all the repute or skill of trade, for which his fellow men respected him, he had not by favour of the lord, but by his own right hand giving it him. This made all the difference. There was not the same tie of gratitude, identity of interest, or affection. The baron who would not hesitate to risk his life, in protecting him whom he had enfeofed—(given a farm to)—would feel small scruple in asking the mechanics and traders of his town, to subscribe among them so much money by a certain day for his use and benefit. Sometimes such claims were fair and reasonable; sometimes unfair, wholly unreasonable. The worse the man, the less good he turned the money to; yet the worse the man, the more he asked for. Trembling handicraft knew not what to do; it dared not refuse; it dared not yield too readily, least it might seem too rich. 'Twas a sad state this, for industry!

The towns then bethought them of an expedient, memorable in the history of man. They took to bargaining with their lords paramount, for rights, liberties, and immunities. When the lord said, I want an aid—a word you will often

meet with in the annals of the middle ages, and which signifies a help to go to war—the burghers said, give us as the price of it, permission to protect ourselves and properties against fraud and force: we don't ask you to protect us; let us only have leave to man our own walls, and guard our own doors, and we will give you all that in money you demand. Concession after concession was made in this way. As luxury increased, the barons grew more needy. The Crusades came, and by the time they were over, half the nobles of Europe were bankrupt. All this while, the towns steadily grew strong; industry felt itself safe; wealth accumulated; intelligence throve; local justice was administered; and freedom was recalled from her long exile from the world.¹³

Upon the shores of the Baltic, and throughout the north of Germany, rose the Hanse towns; whose union for common interest and mutual defence, is perhaps the earliest distinct instance of modern federalism. The height of their

¹³ Upon the highly interesting subject of the rise of municipal liberties in Europe, I must refer you generally to HALLAM, *Hist. Mid. Ages*;—DUNHAM, *Hist. Germanic Empire*;—and to the works of DE MABLY, MONTESQUIEU, BARANTE, SISMONDI, and THIERRY.

power and opulence was reached about the end of the fourteenth century.¹⁴ This singular confederacy arose in self-defence, out of the weakness and distraction of feudal times ; with the growth of more centralising forms of rule, and strong governments, as they were called, it fell to pieces ; and the present Hanse Towns are but three in number, Bremen, Lubeck, and Hamburgh. In Belgium rose the free cities—Ghent, Bruges, Mechlin, Antwerp, Lisle.¹⁵ These, at the time of the religious wars, sought to throw off the yoke of the emperor, but, less resolute than their fellow-sufferers and fellow-rebels of Zealand, Utrecht, and Holland, they were doomed to fail. Switzerland became nearly independent in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries ; and Pisa, Florence, Milan, Genoa, and Venice vied with one another in the enterprise of their commerce, and the popularity of their rule.¹⁶

¹⁴ DUNHAM : *Hist. Germ. Confed.* 1. iv. 2.

¹⁵ DAVIES : *Hist. Holland*,—recently published ; a work of much interest and ability.

¹⁶ SISMONDI : *Hist. Italian Republics*,—a general work, compiled from the particular annals of these states. It is greatly to be lamented that we are still without popular histories in English, of each of these great Commonwealths. The epitome of Venetian story, published anonymously in the Family Library, stands alone. Daru's fine work has not even yet been translated ; and the full life of Florence and Genoa is nowhere to be found by the English reader.

From the twelfth to the end of the fourteenth century this progress of society was going on, —local rights springing up, in the power of the towns. All that time, feudalism was dying. Its great early force was spent. Its suitability to the wants of society had passed away. Society had got new wants. Art was born again, and began to rule men's thoughts. Commerce and navigation not alone revived, but put forth such wings as in ancient times men had looked upon as fabulous. Feudalism could not rule over commerce, could not guide or hold it. Then came the discovery of America, the most noteworthy thing that had happened since the fall of Rome. And following hard upon it was a yet more memorable thing, though, like most truly great things, utterly unappreciated at the time. There lived in the city of Mayence two men, one a carver in wood by trade, the other by inheritance a man of fortune. The name of the mechanic was Peter Schœffer, and the name of the gentleman was John Gutenberg. For years they lived apart, unknown to each other,—ignorant that the minds of both were at work, as they lay awake o' nights, on the same thought—how they might make moveable letters of the alpha-

bet in wood or metal, and so hold them together as to print therewith. A plan of types struck the mind of Gutenberg, and a plan of a matrix for moulding the types occurred to Schœffer. Then they found each other out, as men will do instinctively, when they want one another. The rich man could do nothing without the mechanic; the mechanic nothing without the rich man: but between them they have revolutionized the world.

Friends—friends—this is history; this is what I ask of you to read. So strong were the prejudices of society at the time, that Gutenberg, poor man, was half ashamed of having a hand in the great thing—the greatest thing ever conceived by two mechanical minds. He used to print his books without his name; and he and Schœffer having quarrelled, the name of the latter appears in the early editions of the Vulgate, and the famous Psalter printed by him in conjunction with Faust, who seems to have deserved a very small share, if any, of the immortal fame. Such are the artificial weaknesses of men; such also is their natural strength.

Glorious as was the discovery of America, and the hardly less important one of the southern

passage to the East, there can be little doubt that the first effect of both upon the national and the moral spirit of Europe, was deeply and widely detrimental. They opened to men of every condition, unnaturally easy paths to exorbitant power and sudden wealth; and all history testifies that these are not good for man, but full of evil. Politically their influence was felt in diverting the restlessness of domestic discontent and the energy of civil ambition, into foreign and remote channels. The tendency towards monarchic centralism, which had hitherto relied on the need of an authority to controul private war among the nobles, and petty war between the rival towns, was palpably stimulated by the wholesale system of transatlantic conquest and colonization.

Intimately connected thus, with the modern history of Spain, is that of America. The rapid conquest of the tropic Archipelago and the portions of the two great continents adjacent, suggested rich and varied materials for the chronicler; so much so that a new office—that of “royal historiographer of the Indies,” was added to the permanent establishment of his Catholic Majesty. Among the learned men who in turn filled that

situation, Herrera and De Solis have attained to most celebrity. The writings of Acosta, Gomara, Torquemada, and still later those of Clavigero, are equally interesting and instructive.

While America formed a hunting field for Spanish vanity and avarice, the long closed gates of the gorgeous East opened to the enterprising seamanship of the Dutch and Portuguese,—for the French and English came later.¹⁷ Fabulous India vanished from the dreams of men; and real India, a land of castes and kings,—a land of ivory and gems,—a land often torn with internal wars, but not without arts, without heroes, without many virtues,—in an evil hour suffered the insidious hoof of European settlement to be planted on its shore.

Another, and in some respects a still more curious feature in the history of mankind, has been revealed to us by the intercourse with the East. I mean the discovery of that national mummy—the Chinese empire.¹⁸

“It is not good for man to be alone,” was the first utterance of the All-wise regarding our spe-

¹⁷ RAYNAL's *Indies*; *Hist. Marit. Discovery*, Lardn. Cycl.

¹⁸ MENDOZA: *Hist. of the great Kingdom of China*; 1586.

cies. It is not good for a people to live alone, is the political application of the memorable truth. China forgot this longer ago than any one can tell. For thousands of years she has lived apart, —supercilious, self-complacent, full of busy idleness, and centripetal thrift; and now, that the rotting wall of her exclusion has been broken in by foreigners, she is found the most wholly helpless and defenceless of the nations. China is as childish in all the ways of power or greatness at the present day, as she could have been in Moses' time. It is not the effeteness of age. China has never grown out of childhood. Her heart is in trifles, and chattering, and jingle. She has stood still, until "the circulation of her life stream has stagnated into that of a dormouse in its winter's nest."¹⁹

The Chinese have an invincible repugnance to the grafting of trees: the silly prejudice bespeaks their whole national character and fate. Isolation is the fundamental notion of their laws; self-comparison their only test of right or wrong; blind uniformity their guiding impulse. Education has been to them the curse of curses; it

¹⁹ HERDER, *Philosophy of History*, xi. 1.

bears absolute sway over their entire existence. Their hearts and their feet are equally crippled by its inexorable bondage. They are forbidden to know what natural instinctive individual life means, by the trifling influence of a system of tutelage, that keeps its constabulary eyes upon them from the cradle to the grave. China has literally been policed to death.

The essential difference between ancient and modern life, is confessedly to be found in the absence of any great moral unity, or religious idea in common, wherewith the most superficial observer cannot fail to be struck in pagan times. With us, and with our fathers for many generations back, the pivot of historical curiosity regarding foreign nations has ever been—are they christianized? To this fact all others are not merely deemed subordinate, as tending to form our estimation of a people, but are almost held to be unimportant. Did this feeling always spring from a devout sense of the inestimable worth of a knowledge of the Gospel, or even from a reasoned conviction of the unquestionable superiority of the Christian code above all others for civilising mankind,—it were more deserving of respect. But national policy,

from affecting much anxiety for religion, has too often betrayed itself to be a mere heathenish sword, surreptitiously palmed upon the church for its blessing. From the frenzied days of the Crusades,—through all the blasphemous chronicles of Spanish, French, and English colonization,—down to times and scenes as yet too green for mention in this place,—the current of the modern world's history is deeply tinged by an influence, that would fain seek its palliation in the universal diffusion of Christianity, which we believe to be in gradual accomplishment.

Nor ought we to allow ourselves to rest satisfied with the lame defence of alleging, that these things, however lamentable, cannot now be changed, and that the only care should be to avoid their repetition. This is standing to our arms on the ramparts, while we leave the postern open. I think this has already been done too often. I do not despair of seeing a very different aspect given to the direful, and, as they now stand, scepticising annals of *soi-disant* christendom. I do believe that when modern history shall be studied and re-written, in a better spirit than hitherto it has generally been,—manifold and incontrovertible evidence will be found, tending to

clear the great mass of Christian nations from the two fearful crimes, that, as the case now stands, lie at their common door,—fratricide and piracy.

Hard words, these, friends,—and ill adapted to inflate our European haughtiness and sectarian self-esteem. But are they more than just? What was the guilt of Cain? The offering his brother made unto God was an offence to him; and for that he slew him: that was the first victim of sectarian jealousy. Nations of Europe!—from which of your plains hath not a murdered brother's blood, shed for this same accursed cause, cried unto heaven for vengeance?

And as for piracy,—had ye believed that the thick-lipped child of Africa, and the olive coloured ryot of Hindostan, and the noble red-man of America, were made and created by nature as mere game for you to snare, and hunt, and kill, would ye have treated them otherwise than ye have done? So stands the case against you; and if as unanswerable as it has hitherto lain unanswered, it is a fearful ground of contumely and reproach to the unbeliever.

But we must not give up the cause, notwithstanding the weight of shame that, through ill

defence and varied assault, has been suffered to accumulate against the name of christian. I have a deeper faith in the nature and destiny of the truth, than that. I am persuaded that a useful vindication of THE PEOPLE of all nations, as distinguished from their misrulers, may and will be one day made ; and that the double charge that lies against christendom, will be shown clearly to be the sin of irresponsible men, set in high places above the power of the many, and often against their will. I believe that persecution will, in the main, be shown to be a subtle engine of state-craft, fabricated and worked for the base purposes of party and courtly ambition. And I equally believe, that a very great portion of what is set down to the domineering spirit of christendom, will be found properly attributable to a much more subtle, and, because unthought of, a much less conscious feeling—I mean the spirit of Europeanism. But in both respects—be the amount of evil what it may,—it will, I am confident, be found that the hard toiling, home-loving, god-fearing PEOPLE are not guilty!

APPENDIX.

THOSE who are curious in such matters as the amount of Shakespeare's obligation to Plutarch, may be referred to the following instances, in corroboration of the statement already made, (p. 152.)

The speech of Menenius Agrippa to the people, in which the story of the belly and the members is told.—
Act. i. sc. 1.

The well known speech of Coriolanus to the patricians against the tribunitian power, in which the remarkable passage occurs,—

I say again,
In soothing them we nourish 'gainst our senate
The cockle of rebellion, insolence, sedition,
Which we ourselves have ploughed for, sow'd, and scatter'd.

Act. iii. sc. 1.

—thus given in North's translation of the life by Plutarch, —“he said they nourished against themselves, the naughtie seede and cockle of insolencie and sedition, which had bene sowed and scattered abroad amongst the people,”—(p. 243).

The entire of “Antony and Cleopatra” abounds with minute traits of identity between the language and allusions of the chief personages, and those to be found in Plutarch's life of Antony. Even in Langhorne's paraphrase of the original, the resemblances may easily be traced.



HISTORICAL INDEX.



INDEX TO HISTORIANS.

ÆLIAN, Claudius—was probably of Greek extraction, although by birth and education a citizen of Rome. In the reign of Alexander Severus, a work on the nature of animals gained him considerable distinction; but his most celebrated composition is that entitled "*Varia Historiæ*." It is an extremely curious, and frequently useful collection of striking notes on ancient history—the result obviously of diversified and careful study, and full of piquant illustration and criticism. Had Ælian appended but one reference to each of his sections or chapters, the value of his "*Readings in History*" would now be inestimable. But to quote authorities was not a classic custom, and even as it is, the work is very valuable.

APPIAN, a Greek of Alexandria, who flourished in the time of Adrian. He followed at Rome for many years the profession of an advocate; and having attracted notice by his ability, an office in the imperial household was conferred on him, and he was some years afterwards raised to the proconsulship of his native country. His history, though not silent as to the events of his own time, is chiefly occupied with those of preceding ages. He seems to have despaired of being able to write chronologically a detailed account of the infinitely diversified affairs of the overgrown empire, without

endless repetition or confusion; and he therefore preferred the method which many others also have adopted, of presenting rather a series of complete but unconnected pictures, illustrative of the continuous transactions that took place in each province. He brought to the performance of this task great political and general information. His military details are written with the graphic precision of a general—his descriptions of country and natural productions, with the fulness and accuracy of a geographer. For many of the most curious and interesting particulars of the civil wars of the Romans, we are exclusively indebted to him; and our obligations are not less important in other portions of history. The time of his decease is not accurately known.

ARISTOTLE,—born 384 B. C. at Stagira, a city on the coast of Thrace, which had been an ally of Athens in the Peloponnesian war, and subsequently acknowledged the federal suzerainty of Olynthus, until that state, with its dependencies, fell under the yoke of Philip of Macedon. Of the last days of Stagira we have no record; we only know that the royal friend of Aristotle rased his native city to the ground. In after years Alexander was induced by the philosopher to rebuild it; and the inhabitants did Aristotle

much honour for his services; while his biographers extol him as a model of patriotism as well as of philosophy. His father Nicomachus, from whom he inherited an ample fortune, was the favourite physician of Amyntas, king of Macedon. His mother was an Athenian. Both parents dying early, Aristotle went to reside first at Atarneus and afterwards at Athens. He studied for some time in Plato's school, where his industry soon placed him far ahead of his fellow students. His faculty of perceiving subtle distinctions, and of ingeniously disputing, was unrivalled; and he probably read, remembered, and retailed more information upon all manner of subjects than any of his race. The foppiness of his dress and manner has been extenuated on the ground of personal defects both in form and speech, for which this "great man" conceived that dazzling rings and outlandish precision in the shaving of his chin would compensate. On Plato's death he went to reside with Hermias, a philosophic friend of his, who had by successful stratagems contrived to make himself master of Assos and Atarneus, cities of Mysia, and where for some years he reigned despotically—of course for the good merely of the people. Aristotle was charmed with this vivid realization of his favourite theory of political optimism; so he went to see philosophy seated on a throne. On the fall of the usurper, Aristotle fled to Lesbos, whence he was summoned to the court of Macedon, to superintend the education of the future conqueror of the East. In this employment he spent eight years. How far his precepts tended to the development of Alexander's character, has ever been a matter of dispute, not among conjecturing moderns

only, but among the best of the ancients themselves. On the accession of his pupil to the throne, Aristotle took up his abode once more at Athens, and opened the celebrated Lyceum or school of philosophy. His religious scepticism drew down upon him the censure of the Areopagus, or High Court of Public Morals; and he fled to Chalcis, where having published his reply to the charges brought against him, he died soon after in his 63rd year.—(See Plutarch: in vit. Alexand: Gillies' life of Aristotle—Thirlwall. Hist: Greece xlvii:—Ritter's Hist. Anc. Philosophy, &c.)

ARRIAN, a native of Nicomedia, flourished in the second century, under the Emperor Adrian. He wrote a narrative of Alexander's conquest of Persia,—an account of India, (which is, however, not regarded as of equal authority,)—and numerous other works, most of which are wholly lost.

ANQUETIL, Louis Pierre,—born at Paris, 1723. He was early distinguished as a theologian; in 1759, became prior of the Abbey de la Rüe, in Anjou; and soon after head of the college of Senlis. Being thrown into prison during the Revolution, he occupied himself with historical composition, in which he acquired a singular facility. Besides "*L'Esprit de la Ligue*," his first, and probably his best work, he composed "*Intrigue du Cabinet sous Henri IV. et Louis XIII.*"—"Louis XIV. sa cour, et la Regent,"—"Motifs des guerres et des traites de paix,"—"Histoire Generale de France,"—besides many minor works. He was one of the earliest members of the French Institute. His industry was unwearied; and during the greater portion of his long life, he devoted ten hours a day to historic study. He died at Paris, 1808.

ADAMS, John,—born at Braintree, in the State of Massachusetts, 1735. He had obtained considerable eminence as a lawyer, before the commencement of the American Revolution. When Captain Preston was arraigned for illegally firing on the crowd at Boston, popular feeling ran so high, that none of the ordinary practitioners would undertake his cause. Adams, regardless of popularity, tendered his services, and by his advocacy obtained an acquittal. He signed the celebrated Declaration of Independence, 4th July, 1776. He was sent as ambassador to France, and afterwards to Holland, both of which he induced to side with the Colonies. Adams was one of those, who took most part in the construction of the Federal Constitution of 1787; he was the first Vice-President of the Republic: he was re-elected for the second term; and on the retirement of Washington, he was chosen President. His "History of the Principal Republics of Ancient and Modern Times," was written in defence of his own country's institutions, and in reply to the arguments of Thomas Paine and others, who would have had America follow, in all respects, the example of France. Adams died at New York, 1803.

BACON, Francis,—born in London, 1561. He studied at Cambridge, and followed the profession of the law,—apparently with but half a heart. Led early into political life by the friendship and munificent generosity of Lord Essex, he was tempted by poverty to desert his benefactor, and join in hunting him to death. One is equally reluctant to think of his parliamentary career: his judicial failings, for which he suffered most disgrace, are the least of his melancholy aberrations from the narrow path he saw with so

much clearness, and has left so many earnest and beautiful admonitions to others to pursue. The best and only thing that can be said for Bacon's memory is, that of all the eminent men who have fallen from the way of honour, he is perhaps the only one, whom every one agrees in regarding more with sorrow than resentment. It is a silent but expressive act of grace passed by a benefitted world, in favour of one towards whom it feels deeply grateful,—whom with all its petulance and vanity, it cannot bring itself to sentence to wear the common prison garb of shame. "The History of Henry VII." was published in 1622, four years only previous to Bacon's death. (See *Life by Montagu; &c.*) As a history, it has many deficiencies; but as a piece of genuine English prose, it is truly exquisite.

BASNAGE de Beauval, Jacques,—born at Rouen in 1653. He studied at Saumur under Tanneguy Le Fevre, and afterwards at Geneva and at Sedan. In 1676, he became a minister of the Protestant church in his native city; but was soon after, in common with many of his brethren, driven into exile on account of their religion. At the Hague he received much kindness from the grand pensionary Heinsius. Some diplomatic services, which he there continued to render the governments of both France and Holland, were recompensed in 1718, by the special restoration of his rights in his native country. But his affections were justly centred in the land which had honored him in obscurity, and from whose people and rulers he had received the appreciation which was his due. Voltaire has said of him that "he was more fit to be the minister of a state than of a parish;" his information and sagacity ren-

dering his opinion always valuable, while the simplicity and directness of his character, created in those who knew him the most entire confidence. As he was not destined to employment in the great affairs of his own time, he instinctively occupied himself in depicting those of other ages. His history of the Church was published in 1690, and his history of the Jews, intended as a supplement to Josephus, appeared in 1706. Some years later, the history of the various Orders of chivalry, and the annals of the United Provinces, from 1646 to 1684, were given to the world. His works display deep research, and great discernment; they are unambitiously but attractively written; as books of authority, they stand deservedly high. Basnage died in 1723.

BENTIVOGLIO, Gui,—born at Ferrara, 1579. Made cardinal by Paul V. in 1621. He was ambassador in Flanders for some time; and published his narrative of the Civil Wars of that country, in Italian, 1635. The purity and vigour of his style have been much admired. Prefixed to Lord Monmouth's English translation, published, 1687, there is the following testimony of Grotius to the Cardinal's fairness as a historian:—"I confess my expectation was deceived in him; I could not hope from an enemy so impartial a history of our wars: I doubted not his ability; but this shows me he knew what to write, and wrote what he knew." It is believed that he would have been elected Pope in 1644, but for his sudden death during the sitting of the conclave, 7th Sept.

BOLINGBROKE, Henry St. John, Viscount—born at Battersea, in Surrey, 1672. He entered early into political life, and gained so

high a position in the House of Commons, that, in 1704, he was one of the Tory cabinet under Harley. After the fall of that minister, he became for a short time chief adviser to Queen Anne. On the accession of George I. he was impeached, and compelled to seek safety in France, where he entered the Pretender's service. After the failure of the invasion of 1715, he was pardoned, and returned to England; but his rights as a peer of parliament were denied him, owing doubtless to the apprehension of his peculiar talents for debate. His traditional fame in this respect was long unequalled; and Mr. Pitt is known to have said, that among literary losses, that of Bolingbroke's speeches was what he most lamented. His "Letters on History" were written abroad, about the year 1739. He died in 1751.

BUCHANAN, George—born at Kilkerne, in Scotland, 1506. His father dying while he was yet a child, he was sent to Paris for the sake of study, by an uncle. Three years after, he was induced to enlist in a Scotch troop raised by the Duke of Albany; but his health failing, he returned to Paris, where he pursued his studies, suffering however from extreme poverty. His first distinction was a professorship in the college of St. Barbe, which he held for some time. He then became tutor to Lord Cassilis, with whom he returned to his native country, and through whose favour probably, he obtained the office of preceptor to the celebrated Earl of Murray, afterwards Regent of Scotland. His well-known attacks on the order of the Franciscans were written about this period, it is said, at the suggestion of James V. They were in latin hexameter verse, and being translated into French, made

much noise in their day. Revisiting Paris, he was accused of heresy and imprisoned in 1539; he fled to England, but after a short interval went to Bordeaux, on the invitation of Govea, a Portuguese, who had opened a new college in that city. Buchanan became one of its professors, and taught with much success for more than three years. Montaigne was one of his pupils; and it was for the use of his class that he composed, while there, "Baptistes" and "Jepthes," both of them tragedies in Latin. The plague drove him from Bordeaux in 1543; and after visiting Portugal, where he assisted in establishing the University of Coimbra, he returned to Scotland in 1560, when he declared himself a Protestant. Queen Mary appointed him tutor to her son, the future king of England; she named him head of the college of St. Leonard's, and conferred upon him many favours. Notwithstanding this, however, we find Buchanan not only in the confidence of her enemies, but lending his unscrupulous pen to her defamation. The parliament affirmed his appointment of preceptor to the young monarch; and he did not feel it inconsistent with that national trust, to receive an annual pension from a foreign queen — Elizabeth. When reproached with having made this High and Mighty Prince a pedant, he replied, "I did so, because I could make nothing better of him." All this is vulgar and offensive enough; and his history, to whose composition he devoted his latter years, savours strongly of the ill-conditioned nature of the man. Its value as a chronicle, however, is indisputable; and fortunately the greater portion of the topics it relates to, were too remote to kindle Buchanan's love of ribaldry and abuse. His once celebrated

book, *De Jure Regni*, was published 1579, and his history of Scotland, 1582. He died at Edinburgh in the same year.

BOSSUET, Jacques Benignus—born at Dijon, 1627. Celebrated as a pulpit orator and controversialist. In 1670 he was appointed tutor to the Dauphin; and it was for the instruction of his distinguished pupil that he compiled the treatise on Universal History which bears his name. Its aim is religious throughout. He was raised to the bishoprick of Meaux in 1681; and died in 1704.

BOULAINVILLIERS, Henri de, Count de St. Saire—born 1658. His earlier writings were a sketch of the history of the Arabs—Life of Mahomet—and History of France to the reign of Charles VIII. These were followed by works of more importance, the History of French Noblesse—History of the Ancient Government of France—and a melange of statistick and antiquarian lore, in six volumes, called the State of France. The leading ideas he strove to inculcate were, the inalienability of royal prerogative and aristocratic privilege, both of which being clearly of divine origin, were destined to last until the end of time. Voltaire called him the most learned gentleman in the kingdom; and he was bitterly assailed by Henault and Montesquieu. He died in 1722.

BURNET, Gilbert—born at Edinburgh, 1643. He entered the church in 1665, and distinguished himself so much by his controversial writings, that he was more than once offered a Scotch bishoprick by Charles II. He took a warm part in opposition to the policy of the court, and incurred the resentment of the Stuarts. In 1679 appeared the first volume of his History of the Reformation for which he received the public

thanks of both Houses of Parliament. He was thenceforward identified with the Whigs, and attended Lord Russell to the scaffold. Soon after he was deprived of all his benefices, and silenced, by the direct order of the king. On the accession of James II. he went abroad, and resided for some time in Holland. James demanded that he should be given up to him a prisoner, but this the States refused. In the negotiations that led to the Revolution in 1688 he bore an active share; and when William was embarking for England, Burnet accompanied him as chaplain. He was, in 1690, made bishop of Sarum. In 1699 he published the *Exposition of the 39 Articles*. He died in 1715, leaving unpublished the *History of his own Times*.

CANTEMIR, Demetrius, Prince of Moldavia—born 1673. He was sent when a boy to Constantinople, as a hostage for his father's allegiance. On the death of his father he was called to succeed him by the Moldavian nobility, but the Porte refused its permission. He sought his revenge for these injuries by the betrayal of his native province; to which in 1710 he had been allowed to return, into the hands of Peter the Great. After that he lived altogether in Russia, and was amply rewarded by the Czar. His *History of the Turks* is written in Latin, and brings down the narrative of their power to 1683. It was translated into English by Tindal in 1734. The accuracy of the earlier portions of it cannot be implicitly relied on; but where the means of correct information were more within his reach, Cantemir seems to have been industrious and faithful. He died 1723.

CLARENDON, Edward Hyde, earl of—born at Dinton, in Wilt-

shire, 1608. He was educated at Oxford, and embraced the law as a profession at a very early age. He entered Parliament in 1640, and took an active share in the proceedings of the opposition, which led to the Petition of Right and the trial of Strafford. But in 1642 he united with Falkland and Colepepper in favour of the king, whose authority he was unwilling to overthrow. Throughout the civil war he was the confidential, though unhappily for Charles, the too often unheeded adviser of the Royalists. Had his advice been always followed, and had Hampden lived three years longer, the event would have been far different. Hyde followed Charles II. into exile; and it was during this period that he commenced the admirable history of the Civil War. At the restoration he was created chancellor, Earl of Clarendon, and prime minister. His daughter became the wife of James II. But neither this alliance nor the ties of gratitude could prevent his disgraceful dismissal by Charles II. by whom he was driven from the kingdom. He died in exile at Rouen, 1674.

CLAVIGERO, Francis Xavier.—born at Vera Cruz, 1720. He resided during the greater portion of his life in Mexico, with the language and antiquities of which he was thoroughly familiar. His celebrated history of Mexico, written in Italian, was published in 1780; and translated into English by Cullen, 1787. He died at Cesena, 1793, (Cullen's Preface, &c.)

COMINES, Philip de,—born 1445. His earlier days were passed at the court of Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy. He was induced to enter the service of France by the wily and discerning Louis XI. who apprecia-

ted his talents and rewarded his fidelity with many favours. He enjoyed for several years the unreserved confidence of Louis, and Charles VIII; and he thus enjoyed peculiar opportunities of chronicling the deeds of his own time. He died at the castle of Argenton, in Poitou, 1509.

DANIEL, Gabriel,—born at Rouen, 1649; and entered the Society of Jesuits, 1667. His "History of the Military power of France" was published 1721. The best edition of his principal work, "the History of France," is that of Paris, 1756, in 17 vols. 4to. It is more in detail than the rival chronicle of Mezerai, but less spirited in manner. Boulainvilliers declared that he could point out nearly ten thousand errors in it; while Voltaire calls it faithful and exact. Daniel died 1782.

DARU, Count—The spoliation of the long-sealed archives of St. Mark, by the French in 1797, placed for the first time within the reach of foreigners, a large portion of the materials necessary for the knowledge of Venetian story. Of these Daru has well availed himself; and produced one of the most lucid and instructive narratives of modern times. There are still, however, no doubt, vast materials hidden in the family libraries of Italy, and in the chambers of diplomatic correspondence in foreign courts, which must undergo the scrutiny of a Niebuhr or a Raumer, before the justice it deserves is done to the history of a state, which has been truly called—"the last surviving witness of antiquity—the common link between two periods of civilization."

DAVILA, Henri Cathcrin—born at Saceo, in Italy, 1576. He served with distinction in the army of Henry III. and was a

favourite at the French court. Disabled by wounds, he retired to Venice, from the government of which he enjoyed a pension; and it was there his brilliant narrative of the civil wars of France was composed. He died in 1631.

DIODORUS SICULUS; born at Agyrium in Sicily. He probably produced his great work, or some portion of it, at Rome during the reign of Augustus. It was meant to form a universal history of all countries and nations, from the beginning of time; it consisted of forty books, whereof but fifteen remain; and the title it bore was "The Historical Library of Diodorus." Its accuracy, as may well be supposed, is very inferior to that of less ambitious writers; still it forms a noble monument of ancient art; and to us, who have lost the many particular histories out of which it must in a great measure have been compiled, its value is inestimable. There is an English translation by Booth, folio, 1719.

DION, Cassius—born at Nicæa, in Bithynia. His father, who was a senator of Rome, had been governor of Dalmatia; and the future historian was educated for the profession of the law as the best preparation for public life. In the reign of Commodus he was raised to the senate, and Pertinax named him as prætor. Under subsequent emperors he filled successively many posts of importance in the government of the provinces, where his austerity of discipline earned him the bitter hatred of the licentious troops, who, on his return home, demanded his head. His writings also had given offence at court, and for a time he was deprived of all trust or favour. Alexander Severus, it is true, rewarded him with the consulate more than once; but weary of active life,

and coveting leisure that he might finish his history of Rome, he retired to Nicœa, where he dwelt in thoughtful and industrious retirement several years. His work consisted of eighty books; but of these, save a few fragments, the first thirty-five are lost. The following nineteen are nearly complete, and for the remainder we are chiefly indebted to the abridgment by Xiphilin. It was written in Greek, and was modelled on the older histories, whose purer sentiment and manner Dion naturally preferred to the emasculate and tawdry works which had grown popular at Rome. He laboured sedulously to attain not only accurate views of the great subjects he had to treat of, but took pains to adhere strictly to their chronological arrangement. The severity with which he treated the characters of many conspicuous personages has been often blamed without reason; and the preservation of the traditional myths and romantic legends, which he has interwoven with his narrative, seems to have been condemned with more of religious bigotry than critical judgment. Their omission by a pagan writer of a pagan people would really have been a stupid affectation, and nothing more.

DUBOS, Jean Baptiste—born at Beauvais, 1670. By profession an ecclesiastic, but by occupation a diplomatist and man of letters; he was employed by Torcy on several important embassies, and in 1705 published a pamphlet, entitled "The interests of England ill understood in the present war," which is now remarkable on account of the accurate prophecy it contained of the separation of the American colonies from Great Britain. Besides numerous minor works, he published in 1734, "History of the founda-

tion of the French monarchy by the Gauls," a work which bore for many years a high character for critical research. His services were rewarded with the Abbey of Notre Dame de Resson, and he had just completed the requisite qualifications for assuming his new office, when he was surprised by death, 1742.

EUSEBIUS, Pamphilus—was born at Antioch, in 267. He devoted himself at an early age to the Christian ministry, and became bishop of Cæsarea, in 313. In the polemical discussions of the period he took a prominent part, both in speech and writing. Many of his works are lost; but his "Ecclesiastical History" has fortunately been preserved, as well as some parts of the book entitled the "Chronicle." Apart from any consideration of the particular doctrines to which he was supposed to lean, the merits of the former seem to be generally acknowledged; even those who most widely differ from Eusebius on controverted topics, are ready to admit the lucidity and accuracy of his narrations, and the chaste vigour of his style. The "Chronicle" was intended as a record of remarkable incidents and inventions. How far it was composed merely of a series of sketches and essays, or was intended to form a continuous whole, the mutilated remains that have come down to us, afford no adequate means of determining. Eusebius died in the year 338.

GIANNONE, Pietro—born at Ischitella, in Apulia, 1676. Published the "History of Naples," in four volumes 4to. 1723. The bitterness with which he assailed the clergy and court of Rome led to the work being almost immediately suppressed by the Neapolitan government; and but few copies of the original edition are now

in existence. Giannone was a sneerer, and, as may be supposed, a sceptic. The testimony of such a man is worth little on subjects of religious history; but on other topics Giannone may be consulted with advantage, (Compare Biog. Univ. and Feller.)

GIBBON, Edward—born at Putney, near London, 1737. He went early to Oxford, where he spent somewhat less than two years. While there, he avowed himself a Catholic. His family were much annoyed, and sent him to Lausanne, where he resided for some time with M. Pavillard, a calvinist minister. Under his teaching he renounced Catholicism; and his opinions appear from this time to have become those of a sceptical materialist. In 1764 he visited Rome, and there conceived the notion of painting the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire. The project lay in his mind, and slowly assumed more of form and character. Meanwhile he obtained in 1774, a seat in Parliament, where he steadily supported Lord North's administration and Anti-American policy. In 1776, the first volume of his history appeared. It met with great applause, both Hume and Robertson volunteering their highest praise of it. The second and third volumes were published 1781. Two years after, he went to live once more at Lausanne, where he completed his laborious undertaking in 1788. He returned to England 1793, and died the following year. His friend Lord Sheffield published his life and miscellaneous writings, containing a good deal of his personal history.

GOLDSMITH, Oliver—born at Pallasmore, in Ireland, 10th November, 1728. A graduate of Dublin university, 1749. Travelled for some time on the continent,

and eventually took up his abode in London, where he supported himself by his writings. The first historical work known to be his—for several of no repute have been erroneously attributed to him—was styled, "Letters of a nobleman to his son, on the history of England," 1764. Its success was rapid and enduring; many editions were called for within a few years; it was translated into French by Madame Brissot, the wife of the celebrated member of the National Assembly, in 1786, under the title of "*Lettres Philosophiques et Politiques sur l'Histoire d'Angleterre*," and was much read at the time. The work was ascribed to Lord Lytton, then a fashionable literateur. The bookseller had an interest in the mistake, and Goldsmith was working for dry bread under the bookseller; so the peer was allowed to wear his borrowed plumes. Poor, proud, melancholy Goldsmith! He seems to have had more than even the national share of recklessness about him; and his way of taking half-sarcastic revenge is most characteristic. Some time afterwards, he undertook to write a more formal history of England. In it he quietly inserted whole passages of the "Letters," without quotation marks or apology. The apparent plagiarism was unnoticed at the time; the book sold well: and then he undertook popular summaries of the history of Greece, and of Rome. Both are full of power and beauty. It is sad to think that such a man should have been compelled by sheer necessity to mould such subjects, not according to his own conceptions of them, but literally to a measure prescribed by persons, who devised and had them executed on the merest calculation of money profit and loss. Prior

gives us the letter of agreement signed by Goldsmith and Davies, for the History of England, for which the latter undertakes to pay the former so much, upon "the printer giving his opinion that the quantity above-mentioned, (i. e. four volumes 8vo. of the size and letter of the Roman history,) is completed"! (See *Life of Goldsmith*).

GROTIUS, Hugo—born at Delft in 1585. He studied at the University of Leyden, of which his father, a man of eminent worth and learning, was the curator. At the Hague he pursued the legal profession, in which he soon became distinguished, not only as an advocate but a writer. His "treatise on peace and war," has long been regarded as a text-book of international law. His "*Mare Liberum*" was equally famous in its day. Beside many compositions of a miscellaneous kind, Grotius found time for the collection of materials for a treatise on Batavian antiquities; and finally, in the last years of his life, for a history of the Netherlands (*De Rebus Belgicis*) published after his death.

GUICCIARDINI, Francesco—born at Florence, 1482. It was during an interview with Leo X. at Cortona, whither he had been sent on behalf of the republic, that his talents attracted the notice of the court of Rome, by whom he was, in 1531, appointed governor of Bologna. The leading incidents of his life have been already noticed. His death took place in 1540.—There is an English translation of his history, by Fenton, 1579; and another by Goddard, 1758.

HENAU, C. J. Francois—born at Paris, 1685. He was the pupil of Massillon, and the friend of Racine. He was a man of as much fashion as in those days the son of a farmer-general could be;

and his exceeding power of pleasing made him a distinguished and apparently a very happy man. His *Chronological Summary of the Annals of France* was highly popular at first, and has frequently been reprinted. He lived to see it translated into English, German, Italian, and, it has even been alleged, into Chinese. He died at Paris, 1790.

HERBERT, Edward, Lord Herbert of Cherbury—born 1581. He was a soldier, a courtier, and a metaphysician. His "*Reign of Henry VIII.*," published posthumously, had it been written by one of his ancestors in the lifetime of that tyrant, would vividly express the abject temper to which the aristocracy of England were reduced under the Tudors. He died in 1648.

HERDER, Johann Gottfried von—born 1744. His father was a parish clerk in Morungen, a small town of Prussia Proper. He at first inclined to the pursuit of medicine, but soon turned his thoughts towards religious study. To him this seemed no narrow or sectarian matter. Science, philosophy, and history were but departments of his field of moral culture. The pulpit was to him but one way of teaching; he felt that through literature more and more was daily to be done; and while he never neglected his pastoral duties, he brought the same earnestness, benevolence, sympathy for man, and reverence for God, to the composition of his most apparently secular productions. He wrote a great deal, and enjoyed not only a wide popularity, but the friendship of the best and greatest men of his day. He died in 1803.

HERODOTUS—born at Halicarnassus, in Caria, as it is supposed, about 484, B.C. After spending several years in foreign travel, he

retired to the Isle of Samos, to compose from the materials he had collected, the great work which bears his name. The period embraced in the nine books of his narrative is about 200 years. He is supposed to have survived the Peloponnesian war, and to have ended his days at Thurium in Magna Græcia. Beloe's translation is a very pleasant book to read, but in fidelity far inferior to that of Taylor.

HERRERA TORDESILLAS, Antonio de—born in 1565. He entered the public service as secretary to Gonzaga, the viceroy of Naples. Thence he rose to be secretary of state; he was likewise appointed the first historiographer of the Indies, of which he wrote the history from 1492 to 1554, under the title of "General History of the Affairs of the Castilians in the Isles, the Continents, and the Ocean," published at Madrid, 1601. The only English translation is that by Stevens, 1725. His minor works, including a history of the times of Philip II. are less generally known. He died 1625.

HUME, David—born at Edinburgh, 1711. His family wished him to study law, which for a while he affected to do. But his tastes were wholly of another kind. Metaphysical enquiry early engaged his acute and vigorous understanding; and his philosophic writings gained him many friends and admirers. He showed more honesty in these than his historical productions, avowing coolly throughout his general principles of disbelief in all that constitutes spiritual being. The first volume of the History of England appeared 1754. He says himself, "it was received with one cry of reproach and detestation." The clamour raised against his account of the Tudor dynasty, which was

published 1759, was nearly as violent. But the inimitable graces of his style gradually subdued all opposition. His work spoke the sentiments of no party; no sect approved of it: few cared to defend it when attacked; but somehow every one began to read it. The number of editions through which it has passed during the last fifty years, probably exceeds anything of the kind ever known; and the amount of error thus inculcated among all classes transcends all calculation. Hume died, 1775.

LIVIVS, Titus—born at Padua, 58 B.C.—His family was patrician, and had given several consuls to the republic. He spent many years collecting materials for his vast undertaking,—the annals of Rome from the building of the city to his own times. He began his work in the capital, and read aloud portions of it to Mæcenas and to Augustus, as he went on. But the distractions of the world's metropolis impeded his progress, and he withdrew to Naples for quiet and study. He died in his native city, A.D. 17.

MABLY, Gabriel Bonnot, l'abbé de—born at Grenoble 1709. Rather to be ranked among historic pamphleteers than historians. His works are collected in 15 volumes 8vo., 1784. Died 1785.

MACHIAVELLI, Nicolo—born at Florence, 1469;—died, 1527.—(See Lect. III.)

MARIANA, Juan de—born at Talavera, 1536;—died at Toledo, 1623.—(See Lect. III.)

MASCOU, Johann—born at Dantzic. 1689. He studied at the University of Leipsic; and spent a considerable time in foreign travel. In 1719 he became professor of jurisprudence in the University of Halle. His History of the Germans, was published 1726. It was the first attempt to write the history of the people of Germany

as well as their kings; and its success was deservedly great. It has been translated into almost every European language. His *Reigns of the Emperors*, published at various times, and two works on Florence, are less known out of Germany. He died, 1762.

MEZERAI, Francois Eudes de—born at Ryc, in Normandy, 1610. He entered the artillery, and served throughout two campaigns; he then quitted the army, and devoted himself wholly to study. Richlieu knew and was very kind to him; and in 1643, he published the first volume of his history of France, under the auspices of that distinguished statesman. The vast superiority of the work to anything which had preceded it, gained him almost immediately a handsome pension, and the station of historiographer to the king. In a subsequent summary of his previous work, he gave offence to Colbert, the then prime minister, by some free-spoken details regarding the origin of the public imposts. In a second edition, De Mezerai omitted the obnoxious passage, but told his readers that he had been forced to do so. Half his pension was withdrawn in consequence; and upon his remonstrating, the whole was taken away. In 1675, the French Academy named him its permanent secretary. De Mezerai was a man of strong feelings and little cunning; he was, however, very far ahead of his time. He loathed the dumb tyranny of the old French monarchy, and foresaw what its end must one day be. But he lived a century too soon for sympathy or appreciation of his political views. He died in 1683.

MONTESQUIEU, Charles de Secondat, baron de la Brede, et de—born near Bourdeaux, 1689. His

family influence threw him early into public life, and his showy talents readily won for him attention and applause. Relying on the fame of the *Persian Letters*, he sought admission into the French Academy. Fleury vetoed him, and he printed a penitential edition to appease the cardinal. His first historic work, "*The Grandeur and Decay of the Romans*," was published in 1734. The "*Spirit of Laws*," which is a drawing-room window view of all known governments, for the purpose of showing, that a moderate, loose, good-natured mixture of all principles of rule is about the best and pleasantest form for a gentleman to live under,—appeared in 1748. Notwithstanding its great success, Montesquieu feared criticism; and it is said that he obtained, through the favour of Madame de Pompadour, the suppression of a severe critique written by Dupin. He died 1755.

MÜLLER, Johann—born at Schaffhausen, 1752. From childhood he evinced the strongest passion for national history, and the power not only of acquiring its details, but of re-conveying them in a form of his own to others. He studied the classics with enthusiasm; and about the year 1772, became professor of Greek in the gymnasium of his native town. In 1776, he delivered a course of lectures on history, the substance of which forms the work referred to in the preceding pages. In 1779, appeared the first volume of his *History of Switzerland*. He was soon after made professor of history at Cassel. He declined entering the service of Austria, although that court had conferred on him the dignity of noble and knight of the Empire. Amid numerous literary occupations,

he found time to complete the History of Switzerland. When Napoleon entered Berlin, Muller was there; he treated him with kindness, and induced him to accept the Secretaryship of State of Westphalia. This unfortunate abandonment of the high position of independence he had so long and illustriously occupied, cost him dear. His health and spirits faded beneath the unaccustomed wall of conquest, and ere it fell, he had dropped from his gilt bondage, into the tomb. His death took place in 1809.—(Mrs. Austin's German Writers.)

MULLER, Karl Otfried,—born in Silesia, 1797. He was one of the most distinguished historic antiquarians Germany has produced. His account of the Dorians can hardly be called history; but it is invaluable to the student of Greek life. The opinions it contains are in most respects opposed to those of his illustrious namesake. He was professor of history at Göttingen until his death, which happened in Greece, whither he had gone to pursue his archæological researches in 1840. The expression of grief at that untimely event was universal throughout Germany.—(Mrs. Austin's German Writers.)

MURATORI, Luigi Antonio—born at Vignola in Modena, 1672. He took holy orders, and is said to have applied the entire income derived from his benefices in charity. He was for many years keeper of the Ambrosian library at Milan. His "Annals of Italy" was published in 1744. He died 1750.

NANI, Giovanni Baptista—born at Venice 1616. His family were noble; at twenty-five he was admitted to the senatorial college; and he successively filled several of the most important offices of

state. During the war of Candia, he was sent ambassador to France, where he induced Mazarin to give timely assistance to the republic. For this he was made procurator of St. Mark, and Captain General of the marine. He wrote a history of Venice, part of which only he lived to see in print; his death took place in 1678. As may be supposed, the work of Nani is a history of the outside only of a system, with whose interior he was too well acquainted. The soul of Venetian probity was secrecy; and so completely were the windows of its despotism darkened, that to the present hour we know nothing of the real circumstances of the most important crises of its fate.

NEAL, Daniel—born in London, 1678. He declined the offer of an exhibition in St. John's college, Oxford, on conscientious grounds, and went to study at Utrecht. On his return in 1703, he commenced his labours as a dissenting minister in London. He was much respected and beloved by his congregation, and found time for several literary undertakings of importance, including a history of New England, published in 1720. The first volume of the "History of the Puritans" was published in 1732; it was finished in 1738. Its character stands high for fidelity and candour—not the candour of pyrrhonism indeed, for Neal was a thoroughly earnest man—but the candour of a generous and sound-hearted historian, who felt that his own as well as every other sect had much to forgive and to be forgiven.—(See Toulmin's Memoirs; Wilson's Dissenting Churches, &c.)

OROSIUS, Paulus,—was born at Tarragona, in Spain, and flourished in the early part of the fifth century. Under the teaching of St. Augustine and St. Jerome, he acquired considerable reputation as

a controversial defender of the faith; and with a view to furnish a comprehensive reply to the accusations made by its Pagan enemies, that all the evils which had befallen the empire were attributable to Christianity, he composed the work by which he is now best known. It is rather a series of leading incidents drawn from the annals of ancient nations, than an epitome of general history. The aim of Orosius was apparently to show that to as great, or greater evils, mankind everywhere had continually been exposed, under an infinite variety of circumstances and conditions, and it is alleged that the title he himself prefixed to it was—*De Miseria Hominum*. The book, however, is better than such a morbid epithet would bespeak; it is simply and gracefully written; and it contains a great number of facts, consistent with the narratives of other historians, although not to be found in them, and the knowledge of which it is easy to understand that Orosius may have had either traditionally or from minor authors long since forgotten. In the ninth century, a translation was made by King Alfred into Anglo-saxon, which with a version in English (in one volume 8vo.) was published in London, 1773.

PARIS, Matthew—a Benedictine of the 13th century. He wrote the annals of the Norman kings of England with much freedom and spirit, and described the sufferings of their people with great feeling and fidelity. He died 1259.

PARUTA, Paolo—born at Venice 1540. He was made historiographer to the Republic, 1579; he was also named governor of Brescia, and procurator of St. Mark. His history of Venice, from 1513—1515, and account of the war of Cyprus in 1570—1572, together with his "Political Dis-

courses," and essay on "Political Life," earned for him a high reputation as a statesman. He has been called "the Cato of Venice." His death occurred 1598.

PFEFFEL, Christian Frederick—born at Colmar, 1726. He attained a high reputation as a jurist and a diplomatist; but his writings deserve to be regarded rather as critical than strictly historical. The "Chronological Summary," "Public Rights of Germany," and "Historic Dissertations," are those most generally known. He died 1807.

PLUTARCH—born at Chæronea, in Bœotia, about the middle of the first century. He studied at Athens under Ammonius, and afterwards travelled in Egypt and other countries. He settled finally at Rome, where he gave public lectures on philosophy. Among his hearers was Trajan, by whom, when he came to the throne, Plutarch was made proconsul of Illyricum. He spent forty years at Rome, and there composed most of his numerous works. In his old age, however, he returned to his native city, where he was made archon, an office whose titular pre-eminence long survived its pristine power and importance. He died about the year 119.

POLYBIUS—born at Megalopolis, in Achaia, 203 B. C. His father had been prætor of the Achæan republic; he resisted the Roman invaders, and was sent a hostage to Italy. He there became intimate with the sons of P. Æmilius. [See Lecture III.] He died 181, B. C.

RAYNAL, Guillaume Francois—born at St. Genies, 1748. His "Philosophical and Political History of the Settlements and Traffic of the Europeans in the Two Indies," appeared in 1770. The first edition contained many er-

rors, which Raynal took infinite pains to correct in the second, which was published at Geneva. The free spirit of the work offended the parliament of Paris, who ordered it to be publicly burnt, and the writer to be arrested. Raynal escaped into Germany, and after a time returned without molestation to France. He published a "History of the Statholderate," 1784; and left in MS. a history of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. The National Assembly revoked the decree against him; but under Robespierre his property was confiscated, and he died in want at Passy, 1794.

ROBERTSON, William, born at Borthwick, Scotland, 1721. His works have long enjoyed a widely diffused popularity, attributable no doubt in some degree to their singularly clear and agreeable style. This character for accuracy has of recent years been considerably shaken; they are infinitely more trustworthy, however, in matters of detail than the writings of Hume. The reign of Charles V. is generally regarded as Robertson's *chef d'œuvre*. He died in 1793.

ROLLIN, Charles—the son of a cutler at Paris, was born in that city in 1661. He was educated at the college of Du Plessis, and at the Sorbonne. In 1686 he was made professor of rhetoric, and in 1694 rector of the university. His Treatise on the Study of Literature was published in 1726. His Ancient History was finished in 1738; and he had nearly completed that of Rome at the period of his death. As smooth and graceful summaries, compiled with conscientious industry, and a sincere desire to inculcate humane and pious sentiments, his works are not undeserving of respect. In other respects they hardly merit the popularity which

they once enjoyed, but which a growing perception of their meagreness and want of vitality, is undermining daily.

SANCHONIATHO.—The son of Thabion, high priest of the Phœnicians, is said by some to have been born at Tyre, by others at Berytus, (now Beyrout.) The period in which he flourished has been long a subject of learned controversy; but it is very generally believed that after the books of Moses, the history of Sanchoniatho is the oldest we possess. In this light alone, its value must be highly estimated; and the many features of intrinsic curiosity and interest it contains, notwithstanding its fragmentary state, renders it a prized and venerable item, in every general library. Bishop Cumberland's translation and notes are well known; but different versions may be found in Bochart, Drummond, Bryant, Heeren, and other classic antiquarians.

SALLUSTIUS, Caius Crispus—born at Amiternus, a Sabine town not very far from Rome, U.C. 668. His studies were pursued under the direction of Atrius, an Athenian philologist, to whom his obligations were through after life gratefully remembered. Disolute and ambitious, his youth was passed in those scenes of political and private recklessness, which in maturer years he knew so well how to paint to the fearful life. Although elected successively to fill the offices of quæstor and tribune, his conduct furnished sufficient cause, or, as his friends averred, sufficient pretext for legal censure, and he was obliged to withdraw from public affairs for a time. In his retirement, he sought occupation and amusement in the composition of his first historical work—"The Conspiracy of Catiline." Although in

length not exceeding the dimensions of a modern party pamphlet, it is conceived in a spirit of truth and dignity, and finished with a degree of care, that has long rendered it a model of political narration. In less than two years, on a new change of parties, his former hopes of distinction in active life revived, and he returned to the capital. Espousing the faction of Cæsar, he was once more made quæstor, and subsequently prætor and proconsul of Numidia, where he amassed great riches, it is said by the course of authorized exaction which the Roman viceroys everywhere pursued without reproach or scruple. In a palace which he built on the Quirinal hill, and embellished with all the exquisite luxury that accorded with his fastidious taste, he spent the remainder of his days, sensual and cynical, yet not intellectually inert. The knowledge he had acquired during his African government supplied him with peculiar materials for his "War of Jugurtha," a work no way inferior in elegance and purity of style to its predecessor, and in many respects more satisfactory and complete. Both have the air of fragments, and are such in fact; for Sallust had too keen a thirst for fame, to rest content with the elaboration, however fine, of two brief episodes in the story of his eventful day. He had sketched, and, it is believed, to some extent filled in the outlines of a history of the Commonwealth, from Jugurtha's fall to that of Catiline. No part of it remains, sufficient to enable us to form an accurate judgment. His critics accused him of suppression of facts, inequality of tone, and wilful miscolouring to serve party purposes. They found fault likewise with his quaint and unusual

phrases, his daring metaphors, and the introduction of Greek turns of expression. But Martial, Seneca, and Tacitus, to whom his entire works were undoubtedly familiar, concur in assigning him the highest place among Roman historians. Sallust died in the year U. C. 718.

SCHILLER, Johann Christoph Friedrich—born at Marbach, in Württemberg, 1759. His boyhood was spent to little purpose under different teachers, none of whom appear to have understood the character of their pupil's mind. At last he broke loose from their rules, and, following his own bent, became in a few years the most popular author in Germany. In 1788 was published the first volume of the *Revolt of the Netherlands*, which he never finished. His history of the Thirty Years' War appeared in 1791, and is his chief work in this department. He was made professor of history at Jena, in 1789. His death took place in 1805.—(See *Life of Schiller* by Carlyle.)

SOLIS, Antonio De—born at Placenza, in Castile, 1610. He obtained great popularity as a poet and writer of comedy, at a very early age. Having been named historiographer of the Indies, he undertook, in the "History of the Conquest of Mexico," to vindicate Cortez from the reproaches of Gonara and Herrera; and this is the reason assigned by Townsend for translating his work into English, in 1724. De Solis took holy orders at an advanced age, and died 1686.

SUETONIUS.—(See *Lecture III.* p. 144.)

THUCYDIDES.—(See *Lecture III.* p. 126.)

VERTOT, D'Aubœuf, Rene Aubert de—born at the chateau of Bennetot, in Normandy, 1655. He entered the order of Capu-

chins at an early age, and afterwards became general of the Premonstratenses. In 1685 he was named historiographer to the Grand Master of Malta. His first historical work, the *Revolutions of Portugal*, was written in his 45th year; the *Revolutions of Sweden* followed, in 1696: the history of the Bretons—that of Malta—and others of less note succeeded. Vertot died 1735.

VOLTAIRE, Marie Francois Arouet—born at Chatenay, near Paris, 1694,—probably the *cleverest* and the most mischievous man that ever lived. The variety of his personal adventures and literary productions renders any attempt at an outline here impossible; and the greater portion of both would be wholly irrelevant to our purpose. His “*Universal History, or survey of the manners and customs of all nations from the time of Charlemagne*,” is the most elaborate of his historic works. Horace Walpole praises it highly for its amusing qualities, but, in his off-hand style, exposes several of its innumerable falsehoods and flippan-

cies.—Corresp. vol. ii. p. 21. Goldsmith, in reviewing this celebrated production, says, in his own quiet, bitter way—“fond of characters and anecdotes that may serve to strike the reader, he generally raises or depresses both, as best suits the point of representation he has in view; and if he does not find his facts and personages sufficiently remarkable, or to his purpose, he generally makes them so.” He wrote also the “*Times of Louis XIV. and XV.*” which is full of power, sarcasm, superficiality, and party spirit. The *History of Charles XII.* is open to less exception. Voltaire died 1778.

XENOPHON—born about 450, B.C. His historic writings are, the *Anabasis*, or account of the Greek mercenaries who fought for Cyrus the younger—the *Commonwealth of Athens*, and its *Revenues*—the *Commonwealth of Sparta*—the *Hellenics*, or *General Annals of Greece*, in continuation of Thucydides—and the *Cyropædia*, intended to picture forth the ideal of Persian education.



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